

In 1948 Colonel Tokaev—an outstanding and brilliant aeronautical engineer, highly placed in the Soviet régime—came over to the West.

‘Comrade X’ is the name he uses in this book to shield the identity of the prominent Party member who organised an underground opposition to the Stalin régime (within the Communist Party itself), and for which Tokaev himself worked from the outset of his career.

In 1935, in charge of a Moscow research laboratory, he was frequently in touch with the highest personalities of the Kremlin.

He throws new light on the great purge trials of the 30’s, on why the Soviet-German pact was signed and the attitude of the people to the outbreak of war. He gives an unforgettable picture of Moscow under siege and the mass deportations from Caucasia of which little is known in the West.

In 1946 Tokaev, now Zhukov’s scientific deputy in Germany, had the task of enlisting German scientists for work on very long range guided missiles. Tokaev’s adamant refusal to collaborate in kidnapping these scientists earned him the implacable hostility of the notorious Serov.

COMRADE X

COMRADE X

G. A. TOKAEV

Translated by

ALEC BROWN

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Also by G. A. Tokaev
BETRAYAL OF AN IDEAL
Memoirs of the author's youth

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*To my revolutionary democratic comrades,
to victims of Soviet imperialism and to our
heroic Western Allies in the struggle against
Hitler in the second world war*

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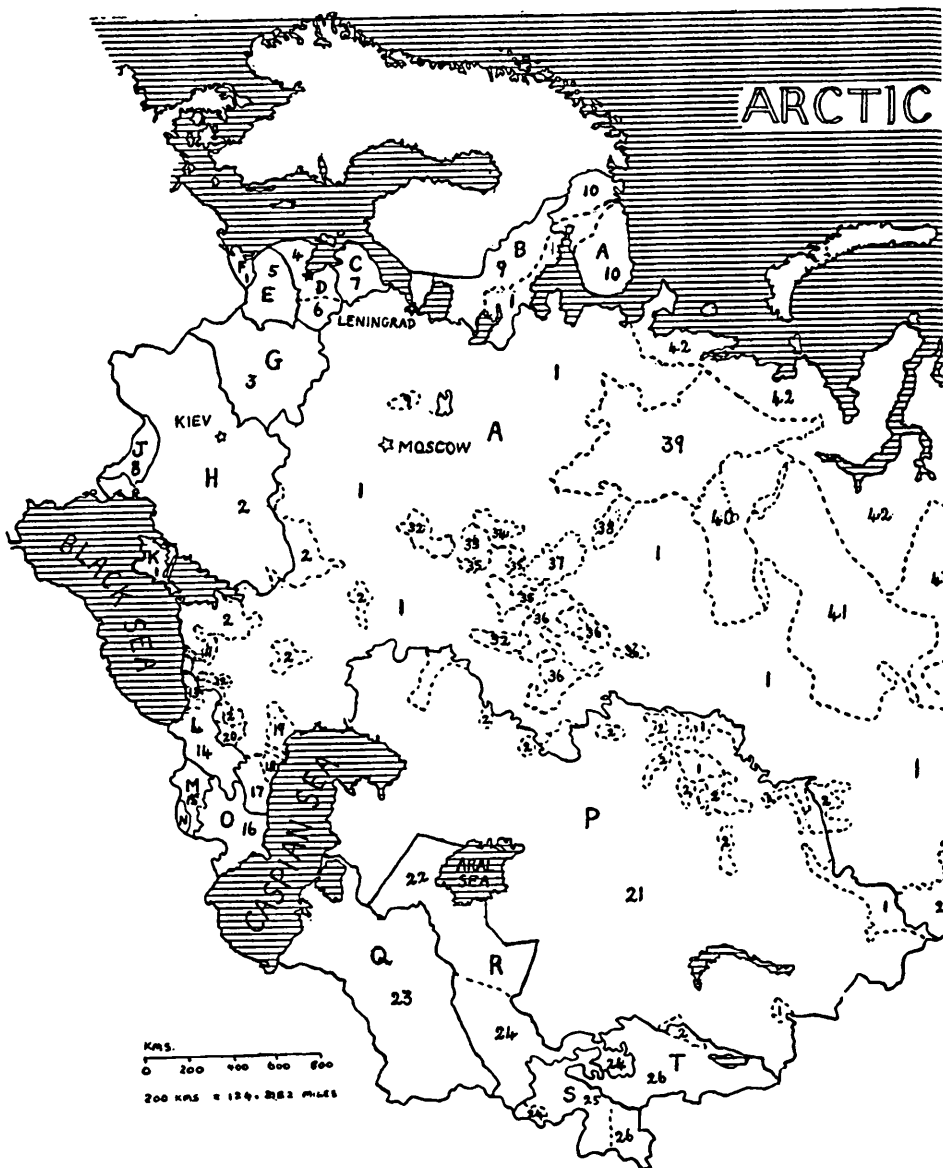
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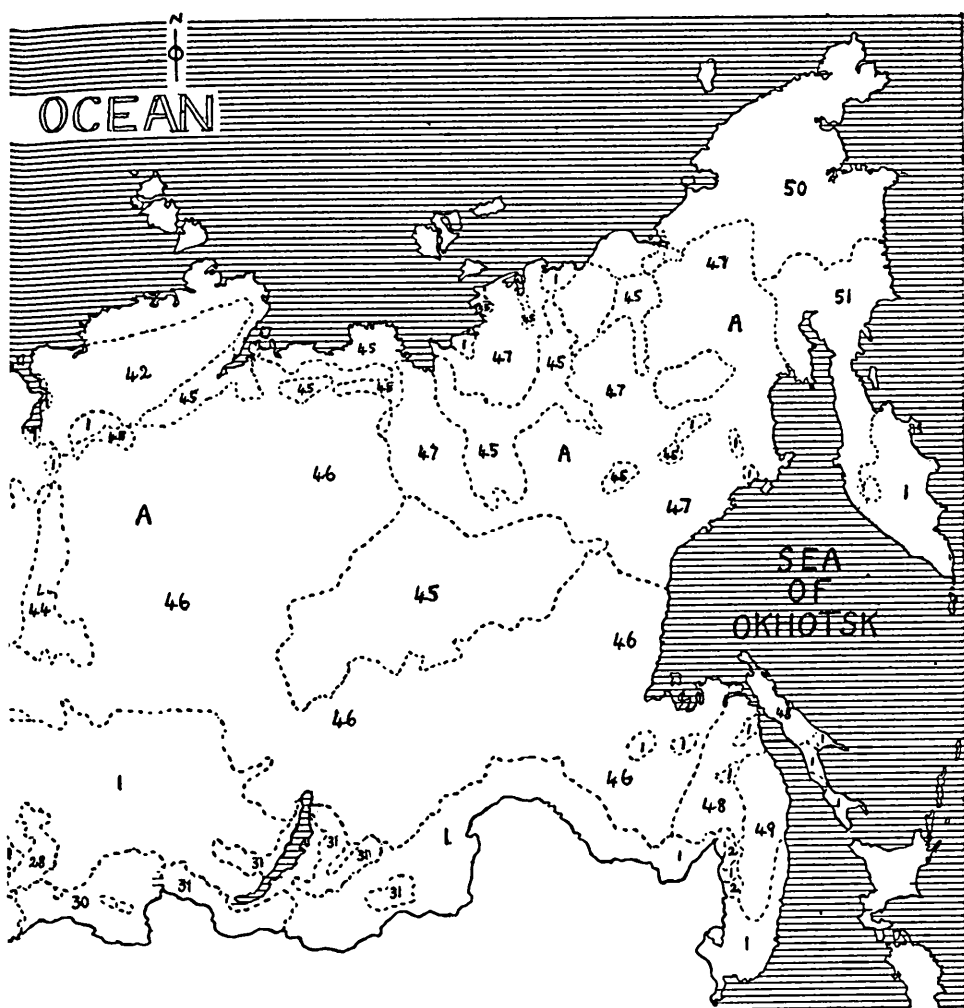
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KEY TO ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS

A RUSSIAN SOVIET FEDERATED
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC
B KARELOFINISKAYA SSR
C ESTONSKAYA SSR
D LATVIYSKAYA SSR
E LITOVSKAYA SSR
F KALININGRADSKAYA OBL
G BELORUSSKAYA SSR
H UKRAINSKAYA SSR
J MOLDAVSKAYA SSR

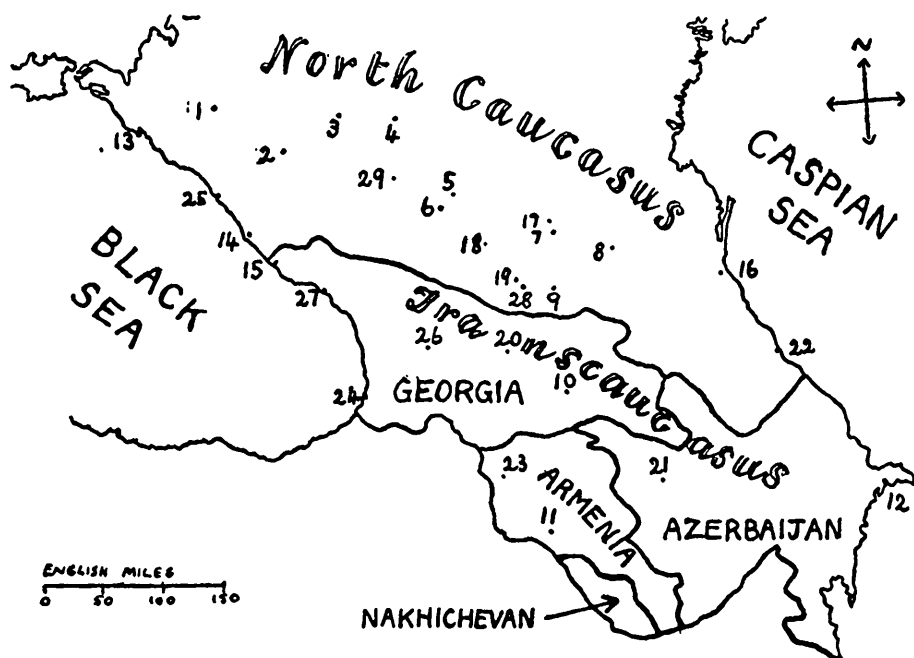
K KRYMSKAYA OBL
L GRUZINSKAYA SSR
M ARMYANSKAYA SSR
N NAKHICHEVANSKAYA ASSR
O AZERBAIJANSKAYA SSR
P KAZAKHSKAYA SSR
Q TURKMENSKAYA SSR
R UZBEKSKAYA SSR
S TADZHICKSKAYA SSR
T KIRGIZSKAYA SSR



THE SOVIET UNION

KEY TO RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 RUSSIANS | 18 KUMIKS | 35 TATARS |
| 2 UKRAINIANS | 19 NAGAIS | 36 BASHKIRIANS |
| 3 BELORUSSIANS | 20 OSSETIANS | 37 UDMURT |
| 4 LETTS | 21 KAZAKHS | 38 KOMI-PERMYANS |
| 5 LITHUANIANS | 22 KARAKALPAKS | 39 KOMI |
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| 15 ARMENIANS | 32 MORDOVIANS | 49 UDE |
| 16 AZERBAIJANIANS | 33 CHUVASI | 50 CHUKCHI |
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THE CAUCASUS

KEY

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 KRASNODAR | 16 MAKHACH-KALA |
| 2 MAIKOP | 17 MOZDOK |
| 3 ARMAVIR | 18 NALCHIK |
| 4 STAVROPOL | 19 ALAGIR |
| 5 PYATIGORSK | 20 STALINIRI |
| 6 KISLOVODSK | 21 KIROVOBAD |
| 7 MALGOBEK | 22 DERBENT |
| 8 GROZNY | 23 LENINAKAN |
| 9 ORDZHONIKIDZE | 24 BATUMI |
| 10 TBILISI | 25 TUAPSE |
| 11 YEREVAN | 26 KUTAI |
| 12 BAKU | 27 SUKHUMI |
| 13 NOVOROSSISK | 28 SADON |
| 14 SOCHI | 29 CHERKESSK |
| 15 GAGRA | |

EMISSARY IN THE SOUTH

IT WAS 1935 and an exceptionally hot year. I was twenty-seven. The whole country was in a state of fever, while under a remorseless sun the ground shrank and cracked, every stream dried up, the trees hung listless, the very sea seemed to condense, lifeless and sombre. I was still broken in body, but not in mind or spirit. I was again in touch with secret members of my own opposition group: splendid Klava Yeryomenko (who is now completing a fifteen-year sentence in Siberia), Riz, a high-ranking officer of the Black Sea Navy, and eventually, but all too briefly, the 'Demokratov' of that period—a significant under-cover name.

Thus Tokaev the man in the summer of 1935. But another Tokaev was also born—Tokaev the scientist. The remainder of my story, up to the moment when against my will I was driven from my country, is twofold and comprises: the development of the political Tokaev from the anti-Stalinist communist-idealist of 1935 to the *revolutionary democrat* and liberal of today; and the emergence of the scientist, with sacred responsibilities to the community and to his fellow men.

I had comrades in Sevastopol, but, with the exception of Klava Yeryomenko, circumstances allowed only rare meetings, under rules of the utmost conspiratorial caution. While I had been in the hands of the NKVD and, subsequently, recovering from their treatment, the face of the Soviet Union had changed. I had been appalled, after my recovery, to discover how many of my acquaintances had gone. For that reason alone my restoration to the Zhukovsky Academy,¹ which I owed to Osepyan, Alksnis and Todorsky,² was a gift of new life. I was back in the great stream of scientific study and research in aeronautics, and dreams of what we should one day achieve bore me up. Following the inspiration of such great teachers as Tsiolkovsky and Chaplygin, my mind already moved in the spheres of jet and rocket propulsion beyond the stratosphere through inter-planetary space, and I was determined to be

¹ The Zhukovsky Air Force Academy to which the author belonged when he was arrested by the NKVD.—*Ed.*

² Heads of the Academy.—*Ed.*

one of those who would master the problems and work out the theories which will eventually make this a practical possibility. The forces and very nature of being itself were the stuff of my dreams. A scientist now, as well as a son of the South, above all I worshipped the greatest marvel of all—*light*.

It was thus not merely to warm my body back to normal vigour, but also with exaltation that I would make my way down to the shore and there painfully scramble upon a rock to sun myself, when free from treatment in the Sechenev clinic. It was here that I met Demokratov and the circumstances and consequences of that meeting will help, I think, to convey the atmosphere of 1935 to the reader of twenty years later.

That a 'Demokratov' existed, I knew. This was one of the undercover names used in my particular underground opposition movement, always reserved for a comrade who had proved his worth in an operation involving great personal risk, and who was therefore entrusted with further hazardous tasks.

I did not know that Demokratov was in the South, let alone in Sevastopol. He, however, knew I had arrived and it was left to his ingenuity to arrange a meeting between us. But before we met, his own health had broken down, and when we made each other's acquaintance by accident, he was already a dying man. Though he had seen me two or three times, and already suspected who I was, it was only when I came to his rescue on the sea-shore that he learned for certain that I was the man he was to seek out; I was able to ease his last moments, he to pass on to me an important unaccomplished task.

Demokratov too had been arrested the previous autumn. He was a highly-educated young officer with wide and important connections. These and his hatred of tyranny had set his course in life. Thus a man who in Great Britain could have counted on a brilliant professional and social career, became an unswerving member of an opposition group which long before Kirov's assassination had been forced to contemplate acts of political terror against both Kirov and Kalinin.

Ironically, it was not for this that the political police seized him, but for adherence to another group which was certainly engaged in anti-Stalinist work, but *not* prepared for assassination. Demokratov was already in prison when Kirov was shot by yet another underground group. Finally released through lack of evidence, Demokratov had been restored to his army rank, and doubtless in time his friends would have secured his reinstatement in the Party. Physically wrecked, he had been sent, again through friends inside

the State machine, to a military sanatorium in Sevastopol; but when the commissar of the sanatorium (every institution of course has its political boss) learned that he had been in prison under investigation, he was immediately expelled, a pariah, a sick man, without a copeck.

When I approached him, he was trying, like myself, to climb on to a rock, but he was weaker than I and could not manage it. He had asked a number of men and women who were sunbathing to give him a hand, but so much had manners already coarsened that they scorned to be seen touching a down-and-out. Pariah helped pariah, two airmen together, muttering cautious words, though he still did not address me by my own under-cover name, and I still did not guess that this was Demokratov.

I realised that he was running a high temperature; bed was the place for him, and I helped him home.

In Sevastopol where Crimean Greeks and Tatars could be hired for next to nothing to drag passengers in rickety, springless wagonettes, it cost me only a few roubles to transport him to his rooms. Shortly before midnight it became plain to Demokratov that his end was near and, gasping, he confided to me who he was, and passed on to me his unfulfilled task.

Demokratov died. For obvious reasons, neither Klava nor I could attend his funeral, but we paid for his rough coffin, and I made the painful journey to Y——, where I carried out the duty he had laid upon me.¹ In time I also contrived in Leningrad to visit his father and the girl he loved. Alas, to her he was now only a distant name which might be dangerous. She asked me why I had thought fit to bring news of his death to her. 'Why, I had quite forgotten the man. Wasn't he arrested some time ago?' She of course had nothing to do with 'enemies of the people'. Demokratov's father I recall with deep feeling. News of his son's death reinforced his determination to struggle on against Stalin's enclosing tyranny. He adopted me as his son. He died in 1939 and I was with him in his last moments.

About Klava Yeryomenko I may speak more fully; these words cannot harm her any more. In the break-through into our underground organisation which the MVD achieved in 1947, Klava was arrested and sentenced. She was—she is—a remarkable woman, and a portrait of her should contribute to an understanding of the Soviet Union.

The surname, of course, is Ukrainian. She was the widow of a

¹ Concern for the safety of others still prevents me from giving any indication of its nature.—*Author*.

naval airman of Sevastopol. We were all three, Fiodor Yeryomenko, Klava and myself, of about the same age. Fiodor and I were students together in Moscow, and were mobilised on the same day for one of the 'Party thousands'.¹ He was detailed to Sevastopol, to the Kachinsky Military Air pilot school, while I went to the Zhukovsky Academy in Moscow.

Klava too was a student in Moscow, and a member of my Comsomol branch. We were fast friends and soon became as close to each other as brother and sister. We were both inspired by the ideas of Morelly. In 1933, when I saw her off at the Moscow terminus and wished her every success, her reply was characteristic: she had no ambition for herself; did we not, as friends and comrades of the future society, share in all good things? Here, as always, she was thinking of Morelly's teachings: if education were conducted as it should be, '*il n'eût plus alors eu besoin de faire usage des facultés de son esprit, que pour connaître et jouir des avantages d'une société sagement constituée . . . aucune crainte de manquer de secours, ni de choses nécessaires ou utiles, n'eût excité en lui des désirs démesurés. Toute idée de propriété sagement écartée par ses pères; toute rivalité prévenue ou bannie de l'usage des biens communs, auroit-il été possible que l'homme eût pensé à ravir, ou par force, ou par ruse, ce qui ne lui eût jamais été disputé?*'²

Klava was the perfect wife. Love and harmony do not always go together but in Klava's and Fiodor's life they did. In 1934 he was killed in a flying accident. It was a critical break in her life. She never married again, or lived in intimacy with another man. Perhaps she was old-fashioned when she said: 'For me this is a tragedy, but not a tragedy which means the end of my love, and so it would be moral turpitude on my part if I lived with another while I still belong to him.'

Klava's attitude is proof that a materialist philosophy does not necessarily turn a woman into a machine or strip her of a strict code of morals—an attitude which is not always to be found in countries

¹ Party Thousand: to fill vacancies in key institutions, the Party made it a practice to 'mobilise' a thousand suitable students and direct them to such work.—*Translator*.

² 'There would be no more need to make use of the faculties of one's soul for anything but knowledge and enjoyment of the amenities of a sensibly constituted society . . . no fear of lacking assistance or necessities or useful things would awaken in him exaggerated longings. Every notion of property sensibly kept from him by his fathers, all rivalry forestalled or excluded from the use of goods in common, would it have been possible for a man to conceive of cornering by trick or force things which had never been disputed him?'—Morelly: *Code de la Nature*, Part I (p. 176 of Clavreuil edition, Chinard, Paris, 1950).

claiming to be 'Christian'; it also shows clearly that the most complete of tyrannies remains impotent to transform human nature. Klava was the enemy of any man who thought to divide the world into 'us' and 'them', into communists and anti-communists. People such as she render the crude anti-ism of the West wrong, ridiculous and outrageous. We democrats within the Soviet Union have seen enough of onesidedness to know its evils. When asked where we stand, we can only reply: we stand somewhere between.

These were days of tremendous strain; we were fighting a rear-guard action against a tyranny which was encroaching daily. The South was seething with the spirit of revolt. Anything might happen. Shortly after my return to Sevastopol after completing poor Demokratov's assignment, the news reached us of Deliukin's death. Twenty-eight years old, Deliukin was the son of a North Caucasian farm worker who, like myself, had at first believed that the Bolshevik Party really meant to achieve the self-determination of peoples. He had become one of the hopes of the leading rebels of the Azov-Black-Sea Region, but that August he was captured. There was no question of his guilt, nor did he attempt to deny it. But death was not sufficient requital: they wanted to know with whom he had worked, and, before he died, to break his silence, they gouged out his eyes. This torture was already spoken of: *trial by darkness*, it was called. I last heard the threat of it in Berlin in 1947, when Colonel Klykov of the MVD 'playfully' questioned me; getting no replies, he said coolly: 'Anyone would think, Comrade Tokaev, you would like me to gouge out your eyes.'

When Klava sought me out to bring me the grim news, I was sunning myself on the shore. Exhausted by Demokratov's dangerous mission, I was again suffering from bouts of fever. But Klava not only brought me news of Deliukin's death; she brought a sealed letter for me and her orders were to hand it over to me no later than that day. She was to burn it immediately after I had read it.

I at once recognised the handwriting of a very highly-placed man to whom I can only refer as *Comrade X* throughout this book. Comrade X stood at the head of our movement. My instructions were to take Demokratov's place as courier in the South, and deliver special messages of warning. The first steps were being taken to unleash another wave of terror. So far only Leningrad and Moscow were affected, but there were signs that at any moment the danger might extend to the South. I was to curtail my treatment at once, and go back to Moscow, stopping on the way in Kislovodsk, Rostov-on-Don, and Dniepropetrovsk.

One of my tasks was to try to ward off an attack against a number of Sea of Azov, Black Sea and North Caucasian opposition leaders, the chief of whom was B. P. Sheboldayev, First Secretary of the Regional Committee of the Party and a member of the Central Committee itself. Not that our movement was completely at one with the Sheboldayev-Yenukidze group, but we knew what they were doing and Comrade X considered it our revolutionary duty to help them at a critical moment. Never did any inner Party oppositional group put forward so radical a programme as these Southerners. We disagreed on details, but these were nevertheless brave and honourable men, who had many a time saved members of our group, and who had a considerable chance of success; and how could we be sure that our own concepts of social and national democracy were absolutely right? For these reasons Comrade X's action was unquestionably correct. He was permanently in Moscow and owing to the position he then occupied had more inside information than either Yenukidze or Gaï.

Before I left on my roundabout route back to Moscow, I at last met one of the outstanding figures of the movement in the South, the naval officer whom I choose to call Riz. I had been disturbed by the sudden instructions from Comrade X, appalled at my own physical weakness in relation to the size of the task. I do not think I was exactly a coward, but I believe I half wanted Klava to say that I should not go till my cure was completed. But, as my temperature gradually fell to normal, she gave me new strength.

She had been to 'Holland', a small naval air base on the other side of the bay, and brought me greetings from Riz and instructions to meet him and others that very evening. I already knew that Riz directed Klava in our underground work. He of course knew of me, though we had never met; when, the preceding autumn, Klava had learned of my trouble and had wanted to rush to Moscow to help me, Riz, for reasons of conspiratorial caution, had forbidden it. I had in fact seen him once when I was one of a party entertained on board his ship, but it had never entered my head that this Captain-Lieutenant (as he then was) could be the principal rebel in the Black Sea Fleet.

Riz was, I think, four times expelled from the Party and four times reinstated. In the Soviet Union there was a special order of such Party 'izgois' as we call them, Party 'expellees', who were of positive value to the cause of humanity. Every expulsion and every reinstatement involved lengthy debates in Party assemblies, and through these the fluctuating strengths and weaknesses of the régime

were constantly under review. By them, moreover, we knew the power of men like Comrade X, or Army General Osepyan, or Yenukidze,¹ or even NKVD bosses Yagoda or Beria, or Regional Secretary Sheboldayev, in their roles not of servants, but of enemies of the régime.

Our meeting was called for eight o'clock in the evening. Extremely well-read in political and sociological matters, Riz was also to be intimately informed about events in the two capitals. He also knew all about Comrade X's instructions to me. He was, in fact, in direct touch with underground Moscow. He welcomed me cordially, apologised for having to disturb me when I was still far from well, and thanked me for what I had done to help Demokratov. Six of us, all Party members, were assembled. Riz took the chair and at some length gave us a series of instructions. No minutes were produced; as little as possible was committed to paper.

The course of the U.S.S.R. was being set for some time, unless we could halt Stalin and his band. The country was being turned into a vast piece of machinery, in which the individual would be transformed into a mere cog-wheel. Stalin and Molotov had mapped out a scheme of international adventures and the slogan, 'The Red Army shall fight only on the territory of its enemies', was being turned into a dogma. They dreamed of the 'liberation' of countries in Eastern and Central Europe, of Turkey and Iran, of Manchuria and Finland. The situation was desperate, but a desperate situation demanded heroic efforts of us, and Riz outlined the tasks confided to each of us. Within an hour, the meeting was over.

In the years to come I often compared our technique with that of our opponents. Riz spoke laconically; he assumed that he was speaking to intelligent men; he did not waste a word. Our enemies handled even small closed meetings in a very different fashion. They treated their listeners like morons; with skilful purposive loquaciousness, intended to induce a state of tense awareness, they drove home every conclusion and every idea several times over. It is ironical that speeches of Riz's type fall short of their aim, which Soviet propaganda does not.

One other detail is worth mentioning. I was handed books and periodicals from abroad. There was intense hunger for everything outside the standardised and prescribed literature. Pre-revolutionary books and papers were read out of existence, so many fingers handled them—not out of sympathy with Tsarism but because our minds ached for the stimulus of any ideas different from the prescribed

¹ Secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets.

orthodoxy. On this occasion I received copies of the *Socialist Herald* (*Sozialistichesky Vestnik*), and G. Aaronson's *The Dawn of the Red Terror* (*Na Zarié Krasnogo Terrora*). This book was a revelation to me. I had been taught, and had taken it for granted, that the Mensheviks had sold themselves as spies to foreign powers. Aaronson's account of his prison days in the first years of the Revolution showed me that, long before our own sufferings had started, others had suffered—not for betraying or disbelieving in Socialism—but because they did not agree with those who were in power about the way of achieving the good life.

VICTIMS OF THE RÉGIME

OF MY main mission I cannot write, but perhaps the fate of three friends whom I saw on my way may help to recapture the climate of the transitional period in the year before Stalin's famous new Constitution.

I had first met Nikolai Generalov through Shura, the girl he was to marry. He was shot as a 'fascist beast' in 1937. Far from being a fascist, he was an idealistic communist who was driven into opposition by the growing centralisation and tyranny of the early thirties. In 1931, when I met him, he was studying at the *Institut Krasnoy Professury*.¹ Our acquaintance began in Moscow's political catacombs. Generalov had too firm a faith in humanity to concede that regimentation was necessary; he was too ardent a supporter of Lenin's policy of socialising the land by the example of model voluntary co-operative farms to endorse compulsory collectivisation of the land. So he became a marked man; and, after the publication of a notorious Stalin letter in the periodical, *Proletarian Revolution*, had initiated a drive against men of independent ideas, he was sent to an obscure job in Siberia. Allowed to return at the end of 1933 and reinstated in the Party, he was, however, relegated to Dniepropetrovsk, again on low-level routine work under bureaucratic bosses of the new order, who treated him as an inferior creature. It was then that he married Shura.

The Generalovs were the friends with whom I proposed to stay in Dniepropetrovsk. I travelled with my pockets crammed with incriminating documents. It was madness, as I see it now: weak as I was, I might have fainted in the train and the police would then have searched me to identify me. But I did not collapse till Shura, returning home, found me waiting on the landing outside their apartment, and could hardly believe I was not a ghost. They had heard 'reliably' that after my expulsion from the Party I had been shot as a 'foreign agent'; though more recently another story had reached them: I was one of a terrorist group which intended to shoot Stalin and Molotov

¹ Institute of Red Professors and Teachers—a Party indoctrination college, through which leading Party officials passed; it continued the earlier work of the Zinoviev Communist University of Leningrad.—*Translator*.

on the day that Kirov was assassinated. This idea Generalov had accepted.

Such was the atmosphere of those days; men of gentle character and high ideals, like Nikolai Gavrilovich Generalov, talked calmly of assassination.

If the Generalovs were shocked to see the physical change in me since they last saw me, I was equally dismayed to discover the change of a different sort, in them. One of my reasons for going to Dnepropetrovsk was to feel the pulse of the Ukraine and, in particular, to discover the feeling of those who were grouped round the underground leader Liubchenko, concerning the prospects of revolt in the Ukraine. Generalov's reply chilled me. Did the men in Moscow expect the initiative to come from the Ukraine? The Ukrainians thought that revolt in the Ukraine must be preceded by a revolutionary move in Moscow. In other words, each region looked to the other for initiative. Such spirit spells disaster.

Generalov went further: 'Tell Comrade X that I no longer believe a revolt here to be practicable. The Ukraine is terrorised, and there is not one leader of calibre. Liubchenko is a coward, a weathercock without any principles. He no longer stirs a finger. Postyshev has got him where he wants him.'

I defended Liubchenko. I claimed that if we found the right slogans, the right programme, if we kept close to the masses and had faith, the people would follow us. But Generalov remained unshaken in his attitude—a peculiarly Russian confusion of purposefulness and despair, of conviction that we must continue our struggle and belief that it was already too late, that our struggle would get us nowhere.

'Freedom?' he cried. 'It is high time, Grisha, that you grasped that the Russian has never known what you and I call liberty and does not care for it; he is by nature so preoccupied with plans for tomorrow, that today does not concern him.'

I did not believe—and I still do not believe—that this interpretation of the Russian mind is correct. My whole life has gone by in the struggle for liberty and I could never have struggled in this way had I not had a profound belief in the people. Yet I must admit now that Generalov was right and I was wrong so far as the near future was concerned.

I do not think Shura quite believed my explanation of my physical breakdown, even when I told her in some detail what had happened to me. She remembered the story of the attempted assassinations and no doubt suspected that I was keeping something back. Not even my Party and Academy papers and my travel voucher, which would never have been issued to me had I been one of Bakayev's

terrorist group, altogether convinced her. 'Tell me, Grisha,' she asked at last, 'aren't you on your way to the Black Sea coast? Aren't you planning to get away—abroad?'

I felt humiliated. In our traditions, a man's place was in the middle of the fighting. But such a question was a measure of her general agony of mind.

Shura and Nikolai were deliberately childless; I asked them why.

'Need you ask?' said Shura. 'Because we see no future for them. What would become of them if their father were arrested and shot?'

'Have you definite reasons to fear that Nikolai might be shot?'

'No reasons, but also no reason not to fear.'

No reason not to fear, no security in the future, in that future of which the whole community had been taught to be proud. Here indeed was the essence of the terrorised thirties: the non-existence of the very tomorrow, for which they had to live. The feeling is not simple fear, as is often said in the West; it is an insidious, undermining lack of confidence. All round us we could see the horrible plight of the children of condemned 'enemies of the people'. These children were cruelly treated, mobbed by other children, spat upon, stripped naked and mocked in the streets, and even the teachers and parents of the little hooligans dared not raise a finger to protect the victims.

'Imagine,' said Nikolai, 'if we had a son, and he grew up before our eyes into a Stalinist fanatic. He couldn't help knowing my views. Wouldn't the day come when he would betray me?'

Their parental instincts had been frozen by the monstrous example of Pioneer Pavlik Morozov, who in 1930 had betrayed his own father, and had been proclaimed a hero throughout the Soviet Union when his father was executed.

The story of Katya Okman represents another facet of the disintegration of human values. Katya was the daughter of one of the original members of the Party who had come into conflict with the Party in the earlier days and been exiled to Siberia. Finally, she herself had vanished from Moscow, exiled by the authorities. Comrade X knew that she was now living in Dnepropetrovsk in miserable circumstances, and suggested that I should find her and assist her. She was not, at that time, in any sense an underground political worker, but she was important to Comrade X as the daughter of his old and respected comrade. To me she was a dear friend.

Shura accompanied me to Katya's address, on the outskirts of the town, a tediously long journey by a limping tram system, followed by nearly half-an-hour's walk through a district of squalid cottages and huts with blackening thatched roofs.

After we had knocked repeatedly, the front door, botched together from rough-hewn planks, opened a few inches; an old woman thrust out an unkempt grey head and, in answer to our enquiry, muttered: 'Nietu, nietu!' ('She's not here!') Shura assured her that we knew that Katya Okman lived there, but she insisted: 'Nietu.' I lost patience and began to shout. Katya heard my voice and came out: before me stood a figure more emaciated than I was myself. What had those few years since our first meeting in the Caucasus done to us both!

The light had gone from her eyes, I saw a grey skin, lifeless hair, an apathetic droop of shoulders on which hung a shabby, shapeless, tattered dress. She stared at me, more taken by surprise than I was. For she had last seen me in a desperate condition in hospital; now at least I was erect, sun-tanned, in uniform and bearing the insignia of my rank. Painfully, burning with shame, Katya told me her story.

After some time in the Caucasus,¹ Okman had returned to Moscow, together with his wife and Katya. During the Caucasian trip, as I have told, the mother had been having an affair with the chauffeur. Now back in Moscow she combined business with pleasure, and became the mistress of an NKVD man named Elagin. In due course Elagin secured Okman's arrest and exile to Siberia for Trotskyism. He then turned his attention to the daughter, for Katya was both young and beautiful.

Katya refused him and was thrown out of her home. Without employment, she became one of the down-and-outs of the great Soviet capital; she starved and slept in the streets. When Elagin caught up with her, she was ordered to leave Moscow at once, and was finally expelled under police escort, travelling like a criminal in goods trucks till she was discharged at Dnepropetrovsk. Here, without proper papers, she was soon put under arrest. After a fortnight in the cellars of the railway police, she was transferred to the town police.

'But how did you end up in this hut?' I asked her.

Hers had been the fate of Alyonka, in Saltykov-Shchedrin's scathing satire on Tsarist Russia, *The History of a Town*, written over eighty years ago.

Skvortzov, the head of the Dnepropetrovsk police, a Party member, a married man with a family, found little point in keeping so 'interesting' a prisoner indefinitely unoccupied, while her case was being investigated by the vast and slow machinery of State. After trying to break her resistance by more gentle means, he resorted to

¹ Cf. *Betrayal of an Ideal*.

threats and force and finally made use of her. Harsher threats followed, to prevent her from complaining; as a police official, Skvortzov was not worried about the law, he was simply afraid of his 'old woman'.

His behaviour was, after all, according to the logic of the time. Okman was an 'enemy of the people'. Katya, his daughter, was an outcast. It was naïve and undialectical to believe that a Party member had moral obligations towards all his fellow men. Lenin in his time had written that morality was not an absolute, it was directly related to the form of society. In the *Philosophical Dictionary*¹ issued by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union we read: 'Rule of law (*zakonnost*) is the form in which authority is manifested, it is the apparatus for suppressing the resistance of hostile classes.'

This answers the obvious question: did Katya really have no redress against Skvortzov? She had not. His power over her was absolute.

I tried to stop her tears. 'No,' she said, 'I am not crying for myself, but for us all, for all the peoples of the Soviet Union.' Her spirit was momentarily broken. It was all the more terrible because the criminal was the man whose uniform embodied the authority of the new socialist State.

The Soviet State-monopolistic bureaucracy is one of the most scandalous elements in the modern world. Its essential characteristic is the cardinal test to which each of its members is subjected: *loyalty to the Party* (though the actual phrase used is *chestnost pered Partiei*, i.e. 'honesty' in regard to the Party).² The basic ethics, therefore, of a member of the Communist Party who is satisfactory to the Kremlin leave him free to commit any act, provided this does not damage the Party, while the Party is free to vilify, degrade and condemn any individual who, though in general of exemplary conduct, has at any point failed to further the interests of the Party. 'The interests of the Party are superior to all else' is another standard ethical formula. The interpretation of the Party's interests may vary from time to time, but the basic test of morality remains the same.

Skvortzov's colleagues were well aware of his habits. They sniggered and kept their mouths shut. Bolder spirits tried to copy the boss.

I went to the Provincial Party Committee offices, but there I failed to see anyone. I went to Skvortzov's headquarters. The clerks in

¹ 1952 edition, p. 305.

² More precisely, '*vernost*' is loyalty, '*chestnost*' is honesty; but the oath reads *chestnost pered Partiei*: the qualification 'in regard to the Party' narrows it down from honesty in general to what amounts to loyalty to a particular body.
—Translator.

the large ante-room looked up respectfully at my army uniform with its pistol in the holster on my belt. A door was labelled: *Chief of Police*.

When my repeated knocks produced no response, I opened the door and went in. On a simple kitchen chair in front of a deal table, a burly, primitive-looking man sat scratching with his pen on a fly-blown sheet of yellowish paper. He grunted boorishly: '*Nu?*' ('Hm?')

This uncouthness put the right weapon in my hands. In the Soviet hierarchy I could claim precedence of rank over him. I proceeded to dress him down, snapping out the words with metropolitan clarity. Who was he, to be sitting in the chair of the Chief of Police saying '*Nu?*' to visitors. Skvortzov stammered that he *was* the Chief of Police. But at least he now addressed me in respectful tones. For him, a police chief in a distant provincial city, my appearance in smart Academy uniform was akin to that of the real Inspector-General in Gogol's play—besides, it was recognised that the products of the country's grand new military academies were supposed to be leaders and examples of good conduct. Skvortzov even called me *tovarishch nachalnik* as well as *tovarishch komandir*, as if I really were his superior officer. I drilled him in parade-ground terms and carried the offensive forward. When I demanded if he had ever heard of 'revolutionary vigilance' he said: 'Yes, I have'; I bullied him to answer '*Tak tochno*'¹ in military style. Then why had he not asked to see my papers, I continued, and handed him my Zhukovsky Academy card; the very heading² terrified him. Before a bigger boss the little bosses crawl.

'Now let me tell you my business,' I said calmly. 'Have you ever heard of a girl named Katya Okman?' His fear grew and he licked his lips. As one proverb says: *randy as a tom-cat, timid as a hare*. Confident that for a time he would behave (for now he must suspect that Katya had powerful supporters), I proceeded to my next step, for my aim was not to lodge a protest, but to obtain valid papers for Katya, so that she could return to Moscow.

My next visit, on Generalov's suggestion, was to a man high up in the Dnepropetrovsk administration. Generalov had hopes of this man, whom we will call Brezhnev, partly because he was an under-

¹ 'Precisely so', the equivalent of the English 'Yes, sir'.—*Translator*.

² The preamble on the first page of the card, or passport, read
U.S.S.R.

ground Trotskyist. For this reason I however had misgivings about asking his assistance, but ardour overcame my convictions. Later I was severely reprimanded for this by my own group: the Trotskyists were a movement to which we were fundamentally opposed and the difference between us was in fact shown by Brezhnev's reaction to my story.

First, he must consider whether the removal or arrest of Skvortzov would be advantageous to his own underground movement; secondly, he wished to discover from me to what extent my group, and possibly other opposition groups in friendly relations with ours, might abate their hostility to the Trotskyists, if he did after all take steps against Skvortzov. It was a fruitless conflict between two conceptions which had little in common, for I was concerned solely with a concrete human problem, while my Trotskyist was preoccupied only with grand words and vast ideas. He wanted to think of things on a 'world scale'; he was convinced that the proletariat of the world was really behind Trotsky; he found it hard to understand why we should waste time on a miserable girl.

It was fantastic, for we still considered Trotsky, already in exile, as a great man with broad ideas; but his followers in the U.S.S.R. were ridiculous little fanatics, perhaps even more scornful of ordinary men than the Stalinists. In *our* view what the Soviet Union needed was *less* concern with 'problems on a world scale': there was no more urgent and important matter for the U.S.S.R. than the struggle for the human rights of the individual.

Brezhnev did, however, pass me on to another bureaucrat. I think his name was Petrenko. Petrenko was a cheerful fellow. He was actually drinking tea—a very rare phenomenon in a Soviet government office, where such an infringement of labour discipline is a punishable offence. However, he was drinking it, and with all the ancient Russian grace, raising his glass with the teaspoon kept in its proper position by his forefinger, or (when he poured a second glass and found it hot) transferring a little of the liquid to the saucer which he balanced elegantly on his finger-tips. He drank at leisure, with all the proper susses and sighings, and after each triumphant gulp he beamed and rolled his eyes.

Petrenko knew how to steer a comfortable course. Had I not pulled him up sharply, he would have addressed me with the familiar *thou* and called me his 'little pigeon' (*golubchik*). But in the end I got nothing out of him either. He countered my every word with barricades of bureaucracy. After a time, imperturbable as ever, he suddenly said: 'What exactly do you want of me?' I said I had already told him; he answered with a smile that he had already forgotten what

it was. He was a Moscow man too, who had been through the Sverdlov Communist University. 'Comrade Tokaev,' he grinned, 'you and I are buddies, buddies in impudence and arrogance.'

Eventually, however, I found the right man. Even States founded on tyranny do not consist solely of cowardly bureaucrats and villains. The Deputy Chief of the administrative department of the Dnepropetrovsk police took the necessary steps. Skvortzov was suspended, an enquiry was begun and Katya was issued with provisional papers and enabled to return to Moscow.

STALIN DISCREDITS COMMUNIST IDEALISM

I RETURNED to Moscow in the summer of 1935 full of grim forebodings. We of the opposition, whether army or civilian, fully realised that we had entered a life-or-death struggle. But we did not realise how far our enemy would go.

I was needed in Moscow because my personal contacts made it possible for me to get at certain top-secret files belonging to the Party Central Office and relating to 'Abu' Yenukidze and his group. The papers would help us to find out just how much the Stalinists knew about all those working against them. This was of supreme importance to us because Stalin's plan seemed to be to eliminate all the original Bolsheviks by discrediting them at public trials.

To liquidate them it was not sufficient to rely on the technique of physical exhaustion combined with mental strain and terror; he needed precise details of a man's activity which could be twisted into some sort of treasonable thread. All this build-up took time and the victims might be moving about their work at complete liberty and in responsible positions for months while the net was tightening round them. For instance, we knew beyond question that the dossier against Yagoda was being built up while he was still Stalin's trusted tool.

I found my task most depressing and onerous, but I had every reason to want to accomplish it. I knew Yenukidze quite well, though not nearly so intimately as Comrade X did. Our movement did not share all Abu's views, but we thought highly of him and his idealism. In addition, the fact that Stalin's men had dared lay hands on the man who was Secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets (a very high post indeed), and whose communist idealism was unquestionable, was a grim enough warning for us. The fall of Yenukidze had cast a shadow over all oppositionists, and especially the Army movement.

A quarter of a century ago Yenukidze was still a great name; today he has been obliterated from people's memories in the U.S.S.R. while elsewhere the ideals for which he stood are practically unknown. Hewas a convinced communist of the right wing, a man of admirable

directness of mind. In the thirties, he was probably the most courageous man inside the Kremlin. When Stalin created what we called the Little, or Inner, Politbureau, consisting of Yezhov, Yagoda, Vishinsky and Malenkov, and this 'Bureau' first began to interfere in the work of the Secretariat of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Party, Yenukidze was the only man to offer a determined opposition. Stalin was of course aware of this and while still treating Yenukidze as a friend and fellow-Georgian, he instructed Malenkov and Yezhov to gather evidence against him.

The open conflict between Stalin and Yenukidze really dated from the law of December 1st, 1934, which followed immediately on the assassination of Kirov; this law established extraordinary courts which could shoot men after a summary trial. It is true that this law bears Yenukidze's signature, beside Kalinin's, for these two were then respectively Secretary and President of the Presidium. Yenukidze signed, but, in the U.S.S.R., a man in his position could not affect matters by resigning 'in protest'—in fact it was known that he had not given his signature willingly. He was therefore a marked man. In any case, he was doomed as an 'old Bolshevik', a prominent figure of the old leadership of the Party.

The 'founder' Bolsheviks were organised in the OSB, the *Obshchestvo Starykh Bolshevikov*, or Society of Old Bolsheviks. These were people who had joined the Party before 1917 and had played a role in preparing the Revolution. Stalin had 'discovered' that the OSB was an agency both of detested 'social-democracy' and of the bourgeoisie of the Western world. Yenukidze's justified retort was that the OSB was the continuation of the spirit of the October Revolution, and was thus bound to consider Stalin's tendencies counter-revolutionary.

On the 25th of May, 1935, Yezhov, acting for the Inner Politbureau, reported against the OSB to the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Party. Two resolutions were adopted: A 'proposal of the Presidium' of the Society of Old Bolsheviks to wind itself up was accepted. So was an offer to hand over all the Society's business and property, museums, libraries, manuscripts and other material, to a commission consisting of Comrades Andreyev, Yaroslavsky, Shkiryatov, Lengnik and Samoilov (who, though members of the OSB, were in fact Yezhov's assistants), and Malenkov who was merely Yezhov's assistant and not even a member of the OSB at all (since he took no part in preparing the Revolution and joined the Party only in 1920). This Yenukidze at once defined as the initial act of Stalin's counter-revolution.

In fact, May 25th, 1935, was a more significant date in the destruction of the old leaders than January 16th, when the press had announced the startling news that the first group of leaders on trial, Zinoviev, Kameniev, Evdokimov and others, had 'confessed that they were guilty of terrorist activities'. Only sentences of terms of imprisonment had followed, despite the law of December 1st, 1934, providing for the immediate death of terrorists. (Later we learnt that the accused did not even hear of their own confessions till some time after. The secret enquiry had ended in failure and confusion.) A secret Party conference was held immediately after this first abortive trial of the old leaders.

We of the opposition never handled the minutes of that conference, and so the account which I myself accept has never had full confirmation; but the meeting certainly took place, and in Yezhov's office. The theory and practice of the Soviet constitution were already in sharp conflict. The matter for which the conference was called should theoretically have been dealt with by the Government but the meeting in fact consisted only of Yezhov, Shkiryatov, Yaroslavsky, Yagoda, Frinovsky, Malenkov and Vishinsky. Yezhov, speaking of course for Stalin, roundly rated the others for the failure of the trial and lectured them on the thesis by which the Soviet Union was to be developed: if Stalin had a free hand, the sun of earthly happiness would shine on the U.S.S.R. and eventually on the whole world; any attempt to thwart the man who was guiding human society towards its proper end was evil, therefore those in opposition were enemies of the people, to be treated accordingly.

Frinovsky, Deputy People's Commissar of the Interior, broke down and wept with shame at his own pusillanimity. He begged for a few more months, to find sufficient evidence to secure—not the exile or imprisonment of Zinoviev, Kameniev and Evdokimov for terroristic acts committed on ideological grounds—but their death sentence by shooting as common murderers and spies. (It was regarded as important both to remove them and to discredit them as men.) Yezhov then passed on Stalin's directive that other rebels such as Yenukidze and Vareikis were eventually to be purged from the Party. The Party was to be purged of 'liberal bourgeois elements and not one appeaser of enemies of the people was to be left in a leading post of Party or State'.

The liquidation of the Society of Old Bolsheviks was the first active step along this path, to be followed by the settlement of accounts with Yenukidze and his followers.

On June 5th, 1935 (before I left for the Crimea), the Moscow press had published an anonymous article, written by Yezhov,

Malenkov or Vishinsky, which without mentioning names referred darkly to 'certain highly placed functionaries of the Central apparatus' who were guilty of 'hypocrisy', 'Party carelessness' and 'immorality in their personal lives'. I was in Col.-General Gaï's company, far from Moscow, when this article reached us. Gaï at once said: 'So there we are, old man, they've laid hands on Abu. Stalin's faithful executioners have raised their axe over the cleverest head in the Kremlin. Abu is in danger . . .'

He was right. Two days later we learnt that Stalin himself had taken the chair at a Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party, at which Yezhov had reported on the Yenukidze case, piling lie upon lie, not, of course, attacking Yenukidze because of his ideas, but for having gone 'morally and politically to pieces'. One of Yenukidze's great 'crimes' was that he always stood up for his subordinates. He was a much-beloved chief, bringing out the best in every man and woman under him by his frank, friendly, human manner. It is characteristic that the girl whom I shall call Zuyeva, who worked in the central offices, did her utmost to help me to get at the secret files, simply because of her enormous respect for Yenukidze. Yenukidze was not only a communist of real stature, but also an excellent administrator, largely because of his great human qualities. If there was a grain of formal truth in what Yezhov said, it consisted in Yenukidze's tolerating under him a handful—but no more—of men who were technically efficient and useful to the community but who were anti-communists. This 'crime' only serves to bring out the difference between the larger communism which could tolerate a difference of opinion provided the general aim was achieved, and the Stalinist version which would brook no opposition.

It is not without interest that the next important attack on Yenukidze was an article in the *Moscow Worker* of June 14th and 15th, 1935, by a young fanatic named Khrushchev. Khrushchev was only Secretary of the Moscow Party organisation; he had been brought to the fore by Malenkov when the latter was head of the cadres section of the Moscow Committee. Significantly, Khrushchev wrote: 'The Party entrusted a responsible post to Yenukidze.' In reality, according to the constitution, the Secretary of the Central Executive Committee (the name by which the Government went in those days) was chosen not by the Party, but by the All-Union Congress of Soviets. The slip of the pen was revealing.

Before continuing the story of Stalin's methodical destruction of the old guard, a few words must be said about the programme of Yenukidze and his group. I myself was never a supporter of Yenukidze's programme, nor was I in his conspiracy. Yet his pro-

posals are of considerable interest, as representing the conception of a reformed U.S.S.R. that was in the minds of leading associates of Lenin in 1935. The plan was outlined to me by one of Yenukidze's closest associates, Sheboldayev, who said that they aimed at destroying Stalinism 'root and branch' and replacing Stalin's 'reactionary U.S.S.R.' by a 'free union of free peoples'. The country was to be divided at once into ten natural regions:

1. The United Transcaucasian States: Armenia, Azerbaidzhan and Georgia; capital, Tbilisi:

2. The North Caucasian United States: the republics and regions of the Don, Kuban, Lower Volga, Kalmykia, Karachai, Adygei, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Checheno-Ingushetia, Daghستان, and Kizliarai Kalmykia; capital, Rostov-on-Don:

3. The Ukraine Democratic Republic: including the Crimea and Moldavia; capital, Kiev:

4. The Belorussian Democratic Socialist Republic; capital, Minsk:

5. The United States of the Middle Volga: the republics of Tataria, Bashkiria, Chuvashia, Mordva, Mar and other regions:

6. The Turkestan Association of Peoples (the present republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenia, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan and Kirghizia):

7. The Northern Democratic Republic: the provinces of Leningrad, Novgorod, Pskov, Vologda, Arkhangelsk and Murmansk, and the Komi republic; capital, Leningrad:

8. The Moscow Democratic Republic; the provinces of Veliki Luki, Smolensk, Kalinin, Kaluga, Briansk, Orlov, Riazan, Voronezh, Tambov, Vladimir, Ivanov and some other territories; capital, Moscow:

9. The Urals Democratic Republic; capital, Sverdlovsk:

10. The Siberian Democratic Republic; capital, Novosibirsk.

I do not know who initiated this radical proposal, but Sheboldayev believed that the forced adoption by so many peoples of one imperial standard was a tragedy. All the men of this movement held, as early as 1930-3, that Stalinism meant the restoration of Tsarism in a still more monstrous form.

The history of Yenukidze's movement suggests that, though so many of his associates were Southerners, their views were widely held. Unfortunately, I have no documents giving the precise story of their fate, but the facts are well known to me, as to many others of my age.

Yenukidze was not at once imprisoned, but was put under house arrest in a small building, standing by itself on the outskirts of Moscow, and surrounded by NKVD guards. Though every

precaution was taken against his escape, one day the heavily guarded house was found to be empty. The prisoner had vanished. Rumours started up: the accused man had been shot without trial; German spies had kidnapped him; he was 'somewhere in the U.S.S.R.' together with Bukharin and Rykov, setting up a provisional government; he was in the cellar of the Lubianka prison. Meanwhile the instigators of the rescue were laying a false trail to Leningrad, that traditional centre of free thinking.

I took no part in all this, but I was kept in close touch with events. However, all that even now can safely be said is that, while Yezhov and Malenkov—so Stalin thought—were exercising the utmost revolutionary vigilance, the culprits were flying South. It was at Rostov-on-Don, centre of the rebellious South, that the conspirators met. They were joined by a number of important Soviet personalities.¹ Yenukidze and Gaï (who had not been arrested together with Yenukidze and had therefore been able to organise his friend's escape) then moved still further South, but on the outskirts of Baku the train was surrounded by armed NKVD men. A traitor had reported their movements. Yenukidze was arrested. Gaï fought for his life. He shot two NKVD men and was killed as he leapt from the train which was already moving. Soon after the other conspirators were arrested.

For months Vishinsky and his men worked hard to break the will of these idealists in readiness for a public trial, but they never succeeded. This incontrovertible fact should be remembered by those who are bewildered by the seemingly unanimous 'confessions' of accused leaders in Soviet trials.

There was no trial. It was not until nearly two years later that a secret military tribunal sentenced to death Yenukidze, Sheboldayev, Larin, Metelyov, Zuckermann, Stinger, Karakhan and Orahelashvili. Yenukidze had been a Party member since 1897, Orahelashvili since 1903, the others since the First World War.

By the time that Yenukidze and his fellows were condemned and shot—the sentence was pronounced on December 16th, 1937—Stalin had already succeeded in further discrediting the original group. Unfortunately, as I shall show, he found support for his efforts abroad, and in the least likely quarters. No doubt, those who strengthened his hand did not realise what they were doing.

¹ The First Secretary of the Azov-Black Sea Region Party Committee and member of the Central All-Union Committee of the Party, B. P. Sheboldayev, the President of the Regional Executive Committee of the Soviets, I. N. Pivovarov, and, among others, V. F. Larin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Region.

But to return to 1935-6. There undoubtedly existed a real opposition to Stalin, which had firm roots in the original and still vigorous corps of revolutionaries, and was strongly supported by the younger generation, men of my own age who had grown up with the revolution and were still inspired by its original fiery ideals of a freer and happier humanity.

The weakness of this opposition—composed, as it had to be, of men with free individual opinions—lay in its division into a number of factions. Though these factions often helped each other when in danger, they never acted positively together. By exploiting these divisions and by ruthless police methods, Stalin had achieved his first important victories.

We were now working in the dark. Stalin was not yet aware of the whole strength of the forces against him, but we could not tell exactly what he did know. To find this out was our immediate task.

Understandably, I cannot tell all that took place. But my assignment proved more difficult than I had anticipated. I had had good contacts; but only now, when I tried to reach the men and women who might help me, did I realise how many of them had already been arrested or were so suspect to the Little Politbureau that they could not do anything.

I was greatly helped, as I have said, by the brave and charming Zuyeva, a typist in a certain central office. She was not politically minded, but her heart was in the right place. She knew why I asked questions and wanted papers of the Party Central Secretariat. She trusted us, and she believed that in trust is truth. She never failed to do her best and we shall remember her great assistance. Naturally we did not stoop to the immoralities of Stalin's secret police, but there were moments when desperate measures were indispensable, for recently an extensive secret police network had been developed. The following story will illustrate what this meant in terms of day-to-day life.

There is nothing odd about a young officer liking to go to the theatre and to parties with young people of his own age; but it is odd and even dangerous when the closest and apparently most innocent of friends turn out to be police agents.

On November 7th that year I was once again included in a parade of military academy units in the Red Square. The celebration of the revolution is always the occasion for jollification in the evening. Zuyeva and I went to a 'family party' in the Actors' House.¹ We

¹ Actors' House—a centre which includes dwelling quarters, a sort of club.
—Translator.

were the guests of a not particularly popular, but certainly very gifted Moscow star. Her flat consisted of two rooms, modestly furnished, for in those days a Moscow actress even of some standing could not expect more. Indeed she was well off to have so much space—and a telephone. We were, I think, ten in all: Zuyeva and I were the only guests who were not of the theatrical world, but we all contributed some turn to the entertainment. I recited a poem of Lermontov's about my own Caucasus—but parties are perhaps the same the world over, and we were rather bored. It seemed to me that one reason for this was the depression of our hostess, Inna, and I tried to coax her out of it. But Inna reached out her hand and pressed mine in a friendly, pleading gesture. 'Please, don't,' she said.

'What is it, Inna?'

'Let's sit quietly . . . I'm tired of noise . . . I'm sick of everything . . .'

'But, Inna, on a holiday like today!'

'A holiday for some people, but not for everybody,' cried a girl who was a singer of Gypsy romances. 'You're an officer, Comrade Tokaev, in a fine uniform, with a pocket full of money. It's all parades and honour and respect for you, but we're only ordinary little working folk.'

I should perhaps explain that it was a real distinction to be included in one of the two great annual Red Square parades; only picked men took part.

The Gypsy-romance singer's husband turned scarlet with embarrassment and tried to change the subject, but she insisted. 'Inna is quite right,' she cried, 'we're sick to death of being jolly by compulsion, of singing and dancing and playing the fool just to amuse other people.'

'But,' I said, 'surely those people you amuse are the workers and peasants of our country. Doesn't it give you pleasure to hear them laugh and enjoy themselves? Is it such a bad thing for you, the workers of the stage, to give pleasure to simple folk?'

Mention of 'simple folk' and the 'workers and peasants' gave a new turn to the conversation. Nobody for the moment seemed to be thinking of membership of Party or Comsomol, but spoke from the heart. There are times when warm human feelings overflow carefully constructed dykes, and men ignore the possibility that a secret informer may be present. This was one of them.

I was particularly struck by what Inna said. She was unmarried and one of those people who seem wise and warm-hearted, to whom others turn for advice. She spoke feelingly of how, when she faced

the footlights, she 'heard the weeping of orphans and widows, whose fathers and husbands had been shot or sent to forced labour'.

'When I sing or dance,' she said, 'whom do I see in the audience in front of me? Very few of your simple folk, but a lot of well-dressed, well-fed, smug, self-confident officers and officials filling the stalls. There are scores of faces I know very well by now, and that's who they are. What is there to make me gay in that? Am I not myself a simple peasant girl by origin? Yet I never see my own kind of people . . . But that's not the reason for my sadness today,' she went on. 'My friends, I must tell you some unpleasant news. We should have had Andrei Nikolayevich with us this evening . . . Of course you know who I mean. Naturally, I invited my dashing Tank Corps officer. I'd even hoped that he'd propose to me. I know he loves me. I know what present he was going to bring me. Like you, Grisha, he was to have been in the parade, and was coming straight on here. But there's no Andrei . . .' And she wept.

It was true. For the past month, I knew, Andrei Nikolayevich had been training for the parade. But during the night of November 6th he was arrested, nobody knew on what charge. His room had been searched and sealed. Inna had telephoned and, getting no reply, had gone round to see him; the neighbours had told her.

We were all shocked, but Inna—bravely, so it seemed—now tried to revive the party. She raised her glass to the Anniversary of the Revolution—'no, for a real day to celebrate, a day when none of our dear ones are arrested'. She turned to me. 'A day when nobody is any longer afraid of the sight of a military uniform.'

Zuyeva caught my eye and her glance said sternly: 'Hold your tongue—don't say a word'—while Inna waited challengingly for me to respond to her mood.

The party dragged on a little longer. When it was time to go, Zuyeva still lingered. She knew Inna far better than I did, so I allowed myself to be guided by her intuition, till at last we were only four—Inna, Igor, a comedian of my own age, Zuyeva and myself.

Inna turned to me and said: 'I can see you're annoyed with me, Grisha, but don't take offence at my frankness. It would really have been better if you hadn't come in uniform. You have got ordinary clothes, haven't you?'

'I've got nothing but my uniform, Inna,' I replied.

'No? Well, I'm not surprised; after all, neither had Andrei. Yet you're both well-paid officers. But, unfortunately, uniform is not in favour now, is it?'

'Oh, you're quite wrong,' said Igor. 'I should have said that army uniform is the favourite in the U.S.S.R. Particularly with the girls.'

'Maybe you're right, Igor,' said Inna. 'There are girls and girls, pet daughters of generals and marshals—and daughters of workers and peasants. Which were you speaking of? There are soldiers and soldiers—Andrei has been arrested, Grisha has not.' She turned to Zuyeva. 'And what's happening in your shop?' she asked. 'Any end to the arrests in sight? Or do they want all the girls to have their evenings spoilt?'

Zuyeva assured us that she had no idea. 'Of course not, darling,' cried Inna, and embraced her. 'But I do so need a little sympathy . . .' And again she bewailed her lot; why had they decided to arrest Andrei just today?

There was a longish silence. Inna, I remember, pressed her hands dramatically to her forehead and lay back on the divan. She was very beautiful, and under the sharp electric light looked like a marble statue. Then she sat up suddenly and poured out more wine. As if in the intimacy of a family circle she turned to me: 'Grisha, why do none of you ever think of dive-bombing the Lenin Tomb during one of these parades?'

Zuyeva took her by the shoulders, shook her and told her to be quiet; didn't she understand how dangerous that kind of talk was? But Inna cried, almost hysterically, that of course she understood, and so did we, we all understood what had to be done, but not one of us would do it.

'Inna,' Igor reproached her, 'on such a day, such talk.'

'But, Igor, what I say is quite right. Besides, I know you and Zuyeva, you would never denounce me. As for Grisha . . .'

Zuyeva protested that I would never do such a thing, but Inna insisted on having a reply directly from me.

'But of course,' I said coldly, 'I might.'

'Ought we to be afraid of you?'

'Difficult to say, Inna,' I said, very quietly.

'You can't say? Do you mean it would have been a bad thing to have had Andrei here with us? What has he done wrong, why have they arrested him?'

I did not answer, and that was the end of the conversation. However, it was not the end of the incident by any means. The Western reader will no doubt be puzzled. What is the point of my story? Do I only mean that many people in Moscow were against Stalin's régime? Certainly not.

After leaving the Actors' House I walked home, sunk in gloomy thoughts. For I was almost certain that these words of Inna's came neither from conviction, nor from foolishness. What lay behind them? Under present conditions, we of the opposition movement

kept to rigid rules of conduct. So, a few days later, I called on Osepyan privately and reported the whole incident. He was seriously disturbed. He instructed me to observe the utmost caution in future and never to rise to bait. 'The country's in a fever,' he said; you could never tell nowadays who might not be an *agent provocateur*.

Before long indeed we learnt that Inna was nothing less than a spy of the NKVD. The whole performance had been a trick by which to catch me. This was her usual gambit—to make herself out to be a martyr, to lead a man on to make some treasonable declaration, and then to denounce him. 'Her' Andrei had certainly been arrested, but she and she alone knew the cause of his arrest. I was to be the next victim. This we surmised, once we knew of Inna's service with the enemy. I did not forget that Igor's part in the conversation had helped to open my eyes. We now asked Comrade X to make a more detailed enquiry into Inna's career. We learnt that another opposition group had already found her out. A farcical comment on the crazy situation was that this discovery had been made by none other than Igor, whose apparent infatuation with Inna was his own form of bait!

A final touch to complete the picture: Comrade X now hauled me over the coals.

'Why didn't you report direct to me at once?'

'I told Comrade Osepyan.'

'Even so, you didn't do so immediately. Besides, didn't I say you were to keep in direct touch with me, and nobody else?'

I admitted my carelessness. But that was not enough. 'You've got to clear yourself of suspicion,' said Comrade X. 'You must denounce Inna. You and Zuyeva together. Describe the whole incident, every word that was said. If not, there's always a danger of your being charged with wilful concealment of her "anti-soviet" talk.' He told me to submit the report to two offices. 'If you do this, they will be convinced in the right places that you are both unadulterated lackeys of the régime, and there is no need to shadow you.'

My only difficulty was to persuade Zuyeva that this was necessary. She thought me a little mad, for of course she could not know that I had discussed our unhappy party at the Actors' House with such high-placed men as Osepyan and Comrade X.

Such was the atmosphere. We were all marked men. We were not individuals with private lives. We had only public lives, but we had to pretend to live them as if they were private, though at the same time considering every personal incident, however petty, as if it were happening in public.

Is it surprising that Soviet life had already become enervating?

And all this time, while I was still not altogether free from the attentions of the secret service, I was pursuing the most exacting studies, and simultaneously, in what were called my free hours, 'loyally' attending closed Party meetings, consultations, conferences.

The ever recurrent theme was 'revolutionary vigilance'. From now on a Party member was expected to 'study'—that is to say, to spy upon and probe into the inner thoughts of wife, brother, sister, father, mother, son, daughter, comrade, colleague, acquaintance—anybody and everybody. Those of us who had 'tails' (black marks) in our records were the prey of the fanatics. I cannot recall a single Party assembly I attended at that period at which my name was not mentioned. I was 'social-democratic dregs', a 'Bukharin protégé', a 'white-guard draggle-tail'. They could not reconcile themselves to my restoration to Army and Party. But behind me stood the ultimate support of Ordzhonikidze and the decision of Yezhov's deputy, Yaroslavsky; I was to be reinstated, and they could do nothing more than tear at my nerves.

This they did to breaking point. Even my inner conviction that my part in the movement might contribute to saving the country from the grip of Stalin and Comrade X's orders to be calm and suffer the fanatics in silence, did not always enable me to remain seemingly imperturbable.

After one meeting I was summoned before the Deputy Chief of the Academy on the political side, Divisional Commissar Smolensky. He asked me how I felt. Fine, I told him. 'Do you mean it, Comrade Tokaev?' I replied that army regulations did not permit a junior officer to answer his senior insincerely. 'Just so, just so,' said Smolensky. 'You bare your fangs even at me.' He had been watching my face during the meeting, and now he scolded me gently for my inability to turn the other cheek. Thus challenged, I asked him why he allowed the fanatics to go on as they did.

'Comrade Commissar,' I said, 'I must tell you that as a human being I am fed up to the teeth with it all. How long is it going to last? How long am I to be called an enemy of the people?'

He looked at me curiously. 'Do you think that I'm not fed up to the teeth? Do you think Comrade Todorsky (Todorsky was head of the Academy) is not fed up to the teeth?'

About the middle of January, 1936, I was so at the end of my tether that I thought seriously of suicide. This kind of life was not worth living. One day I said this frankly to Smolensky. His sharp retort pulled me up. 'Who on earth,' he roared, 'gave you, a son of the proud and manly Caucasus, the right to play the coward in Moscow?' He glared at me so fiercely that I fully expected to feel his fist crash

into my face. 'What ethical or political justification have you to babble about suicide? If you really are a coward, take out your revolver and do it here and now! If you consider yourself a true son of your people, and really believe in your ideals of human society, it's your duty to fight for them. Any fool can shoot himself, but it isn't every man who can join in the struggle . . . You must learn to combine science and political life. If Stalin boasts that the fortress does not exist which a bolshevik cannot take, we have twice and three times the duty to make that claim, because we are the last hope of the peoples of the Soviet Union.'

After this long and passionate dressing-down, I did try to keep control of myself. Nevertheless, the day soon came when my safety-valve burst and, mounting the tribune, I lashed out at my opponents. Osepyan was on the platform, and he passed a note to me to keep calm. In a flash I was ashamed of losing my self-control. I did not belong to myself alone, but to the comrades fighting with me for freedom. To the astonishment of them all, I disarmed the enemy by climbing down and apologising 'frankly' for the personal attacks I had made on the fanatics.

After the meeting I was summoned to Smolensky's room. I found Osepyan there, with Todorsky and Smolensky.

'Oh, what a headache you are, old man,' were Osepyan's simple words to me. 'Hot words come too easily to your tongue . . . But I've only sent for you to say thank-you! Yes, thank-you for realising your mistake and apologising as you did . . .'

It was a memorable day.

STALIN'S PRESTIGE REINFORCED BY THE WEST

IN CONSOLIDATING his power, Stalin was, tragically, aided by foreign statesmen.

In 1935 he made a master move. Deeply committed to a policy of annihilating all opposition at home, abroad he joined the League of Nations. After this, foreign statesmen visited him—Pierre Laval, President Beneš, Anthony Eden.

To the democratic opposition within the U.S.S.R. these visits were a mortal blow, as ill-timed as had been the recognition of the U.S.S.R. by the United States in 1933. Let me not be misunderstood. I do not mean that it was bad that the U.S.A. established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union; indeed, it was unfortunate that they were so slow to take that step. It was the timing that was tragic—at the height of the great famine in the Ukraine and the North Caucasus, a famine caused directly by Stalin's brutal policy of land collectivisation, in which millions died of starvation. Recognition was swiftly followed by lavish technical and technological aid; the Stalin régime, as yet most unstable, was thereby immeasurably encouraged and strengthened. Stalin's adherence to the League of Nations was but the logical culmination.

From our point of view, this was a grave tactical error on the part of the West. Iron curtains have two sides. There is a Western illusion that because the Soviet Union chooses to isolate itself it is ignorant of the West, but that the converse is not true. In reality, the West, at the highest level, seems to be colossally ignorant of Kremlin strategy, tactics, policy and psychology. Just when the opposition was being shattered by the enemy, the West began its co-existential junketings. For us Laval was the personification of France, the country to which we looked for inspiration, the land of truly liberal thought and, since the Revolution, of classical democracy. His visit was a sly knife-thrust from a friend. No foreign diplomatist ever contributed so much so swiftly as Laval to the deification of Stalin. The climax was the signature of the Franco-Soviet

Pact. One was reminded of the support given to Tsarism by the pre-1914 France of Poincaré.

At this time, the vanguard of the opposition was in the Soviet Air Force. On May 15th, Bulganin, as Chairman of the Moscow Soviet, gave the French visitors a gala reception. Laval was taken to Monino, our principal aerodrome, but also the centre of our most restive airmen. The visitors were conducted by a party headed by Politbureau member and People's Commissar of Defence Marshal Voroshilov. All smiles, he 'presented' outstanding pilots. He invited Laval to join a particular group of senior officers, which included some of the most courageous members of the under-cover opposition. For half an hour all were good fellows together. Little did our guests know that only two years later many of those present, already under suspicion, would be arrested, tried, condemned and shot, the excuse being that they had had 'relations with foreign spies' during the French state visit!

President Beneš and Czechoslovakia symbolised for us the very concept of self-determination of peoples, of freedom and of true democratic development. We had the greatest respect for the Czechs and the Slovaks. The more crushing was our disappointment at the President's behaviour.

I am anxious not to be misunderstood. 'Liberation' by foreign intervention is worse than worthless. Czechoslovakia could not resist the advance of Stalinism inside our country. That was our own task. We had in fact good openings for approaching Czechoslovak Government circles, but we never once asked for their help, if only to avoid endangering the standing of Beneš and his colleagues. We were cautious. Beneš was not.

When the great army oppositionist whom I call Comrade X hinted to Beneš that an imperialist conspiracy against the Eastern European countries was maturing in the Kremlin, he was astounded to hear him reply with irritation: 'We have the friendliest relations with the Soviet Government. I would rather you addressed such warnings elsewhere.' But this is not the whole story. So carried away was Beneš by his talks with Stalin and Molotov that his frankness went to serious lengths. He gave a hint to Stalin that a 'conspiracy' was hatching against him. He mentioned no names. Nevertheless, Stalin found the indication useful, because his men knew with whom Beneš had been in contact.

To 'reasonable' people Beneš's visit looked like an act of perfect common sense. To those of us in the U.S.S.R. who shared the President's ideas about democracy, his visit was a mortal blow. At closed Party Conferences official spokesmen used it to convince

us that Czechoslovakia fully endorsed Stalin's foreign policy, and thus to build up Stalin.¹

In those days Beria scrambled to high places. He was a master hand at falsifying history. Already a member of the Central Committee and of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee (the Government), as well as First Secretary of the Transcaucasian Party, in August, 1935, he published a series of articles in *Pravda*, entitled 'Contribution to the History of the Bolshevik Branches in Transcaucasia'. He claimed that the Party in Transcaucasia owed nearly everything to Stalin, and ascribed to him not only measures which he could have effected but did not, but also acts he could never have committed. These articles, which later appeared as a book, became the foundation of the Stalin legend: if as a boy, before 1914, Stalin had already accomplished so much, how easy it was for the young generation of the thirties to believe that he had been Lenin's right hand during the Revolution itself! .

When at the same time Stalin's reputation was enhanced by the apparent approval of Western statesmen, cows began to give more milk 'thanks to the brilliance of Stalin', mothers bore large families and we were not free from the conception of Stalin as the universal father. Beria proved that his wisdom had been there from the outset. A form of mysticism developed which helped to paralyse the will of the masses and, even among the thinkers and managers of society, produced a sort of *automatism of the reason* which in every field forced them to respond to the same key phrases and patterns of behaviour.

The fantastic nature of a cult is no reason for ignoring its objective existence. Nor should it be too lightly assumed—as it seems to be—that the cult has come to a permanent end.

What I mean by automatism of the reason—or mental automatism—is a certain state of the intelligence peculiar to mass society in a highly-integrated state. An environment is created in which a man loses his ability to reflect non-collectively and his faculty of individual critical reaction to current events; he becomes merely a unit in a vast piece of machinery and does exclusively what he is required to do, like a screw or bolt or cog. He naturally shouts *hoorah* when all the others shout, he weeps when they weep, he is silent when the rest are silent.

I remember the beginning of this process of conditioning. Two occasions in 1935 will suffice as illustrations. In the midst of the terror Stalin, together with Molotov, Chubar, Voroshilov and

¹ Cf. note to this chapter on p. 37.

others of the Kremlin, chose to pay an unexpected visit, on May 2nd, to the Frunze Central Military Aerodrome, one of the centres of his irreconcilable enemies. Pilots were embraced and even kissed and all manner of sweet, winning words were said to them. It was a demonstration of the honey-cake policy on a lavish scale, followed the next day by an informal party for airmen. What a party it was! Rare wines, exquisite things to eat, the flower of Moscow's theatre-land—actresses, singers, ballerinas; a balalaika orchestra; the favourite songs of the Air Force; toast upon toast to 'our heroic airmen' and their wives, children, fathers, mothers, grandparents and even great-grandparents. Photographs were taken, hosts and guests together—all one great happy family.

At half past one the following day, yet another show was put on: opposite the main Kremlin palace, a parade of the members of the military academies, headed by the Air Force. No one came on foot. Every visitor was fetched and taken back to quarters in a smart Kremlin limousine. There was a grand inspection by Kalinin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Chubar, Mezhlauk, Ordzhonikidze and a large suite. Triumphant speeches were made. Everything was done to distract the attention of rebellious minds. Molotov exchanged kisses with Col.-General Todorsky of the Zhukovsky Academy, whom only two years later he and his group were to arrest, condemn, and send as lumberjack to the forests of Karelia. Voroshilov embraced the C.O. of the Frunze Academy, who two years later was shot as a 'German spy'.

After the parade a banquet was held: a truly democratic banquet at which Generals sat beside simple cadets, Marshals beside Captains, and leaders of the 'world proletariat' next to ordinary lieutenants. This condescension had a great effect, particularly on the younger people.

Vast sums were spent in this way. All this took place shortly *before* the arrest of Yenukidze who was, properly, the guest-master at the Kremlin. He was outraged; he pushed the organisers out of his room, shouting: 'The workers have bare backsides, and you have the impudence to throw junketings in imperial style and squander the people's money.' But Stalin was already more powerful than he.

Voroshilov made a speech, the first toast had been drunk when the whisper went round: Stalin—Stalin himself, Stalin was actually coming. Then, his right hand thrust between the buttons of his paramilitary tunic, in came the great man. An ovation shook the walls! Voroshilov spoke again, there was endless cheering, till at last Stalin himself rose to speak. Emotion ran riot. Men and women turned

to one another and embraced and kissed. There were tears of exaltation in many eyes. Admiral Orlov, Supreme Commander of the Soviet Navy, actually sobbed as he clapped hysterically and in a broken voice cried: 'Hoorah! Hoorah! Hoorah!'

Not in every case, of course, did the outward signs of enthusiasm imply complete mental automatism. For instance, there was Comrade X applauding, indistinguishable from the others—except to the keen eye of one who knew him and his thoughts of how, in the common interest, only a week before this night, he had at the eleventh hour cancelled a plan which would have made this assembly impossible. A certain pilot also applauded with a twisted smile. Every now and then he glanced at Comrade X or Alksnis or Osepyan, and wondered where he would have been that May 1st had he committed the act that had been planned (and which Inna had provocatively suggested) of dive-bombing the Lenin Mausoleum and the Polit-bureau.

Stalin's speech revealed his tactical sense. Though he had been chairman at the recent meeting of the Party which had resolved to encourage the cult of his greatness he now remarked how wrong it was to ascribe the country's successes to any single leader! How convincing was this move to most of those present, and what an excellent framework for the coming attack on 'Buryto'—the Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky group.

Everybody present knew that Buryto were against State-monopolistic tendencies and the policy of extreme measures which Stalin was pursuing. Now, as if among intimates, Stalin suddenly referred to this fact. 'Our critics,' he said, 'have not always limited themselves to passive opposition and criticism; on occasion they have threatened to start a revolt within the Party against the Central Committee; more than that, they have even threatened one or two of us with a bullet in the back; but we have only forged ahead still faster, sweeping every hindrance aside. If some people got bruised that couldn't be helped . . .'

Was it surprising that this simple humour should arouse yet another ovation? When he added with a sly smile: 'I must admit that I lent a hand in that bruising . . .' the cheering was redoubled.

Next, he held out carrots to his audience, glorious prospects of advancement, careers. The Red Army was being armed with the finest weapons of modern engineering, and this called for more and more men who were experts in the latest technology . . . 'Cadres will solve all difficulties,' he said, 'that is now our principal concern; our most valuable resources are our men, our cadres. We must treat our cadres with the greatest care and value each man individually.'

Some time later Belinsky and I were the guests of Kostrov, a Party member who held a Government post of moderate responsibility. That we were his guests showed that he tried to think for himself, for in spite of the prevailing automatism there was some independence of mind left.

'Well, what do you people in the Academy think of Comrade Stalin's speech?' asked Kestrov.

'And what do you think in your establishment?' I countered.

'Oh, nothing in particular . . . We are all officials, it is not for us to think. But you of the military academies—after all it was you he was aiming at. I must say, I begin to wonder if a lot of the criticism of Stalin has not been rather prejudiced . . .'

'Prejudiced?' cried Belinsky. 'In other words, you think that any criticism of the general line of the Party is wrong?'

'Oh no,' said Kostrov, 'I wouldn't go as far as that. No, what I was thinking is that Stalin's speech seems to be evidence of his readiness to make allowances, to ease tension, to stop arrests and shootings . . . He did make a clear statement that our cadres must be taken care of. . . .'

This—from a man who, only a few months ago had called Stalin a murderer, a man who was in our eyes 'all but' one of us!

Thus, day by day, week by week, towards the end of 1935, we saw normally intelligent men, one after another, shrink from the anti-Stalinist conclusions to which facts and reason had been forcing them, and take refuge in hesitation and doubt, in mental automatism.

It was not for nothing that Stalin underlined the need for the State to look after its cadres, since they were the indispensable tools of the State. He had already demonstrated that even the suspicion of rebellion meant degradation, torture, death; good service, on the other hand, meant advancement, privileges, comfort. This was not only true of the armed forces.

I recall a discussion of the new social set-up in the early winter of 1935. On November 17th an All-Union conference was held of leading men in heavy industry. I attended as a visitor, on a ticket issued by Ordzhonikidze. As usual, a number of us rebels were present. The delegates were all 'captains of industry', Stakhanovites who had set high standards of productivity, proletarians decorated for their outstanding work and even a number of workmen from the benches. All, of course, were Party members. The subject of the conference was 'how to raise the general level of heavy industry'. These leading men were, after a formal discussion, to accept resolutions and directives and then go back to their factories to start a new drive.

During the conference, the director of a large military aircraft factory, whom I considered 'almost an oppositionist' gave a small party. The guests were his assistant on the planning side, his chief engineer, the chief engineer of a machine tool factory in the South, two civilian university professors and myself.

The Southerner jokingly observed that his wife called him a 'worker aristocrat'. Perhaps she was right, I said. 'Right, you say?' and he clapped me on the shoulder. 'Then please tell me what a worker aristocrat is!'

I replied that before the Revolution an aristocrat was a member of the privileged nobility, a man who held aloof from the masses, thought himself above the common people and enjoyed advantages which were unknown to them.

If that was so, he said, then this whole conference was aristocratic. They were all 'worker aristocrats'—men who yesterday were ordinary simple folk, but who had now passed the middle rungs of the hierarchical ladder and arrived at a privileged position.

But was this not a good thing, many will ask—this advancement of the common man? Yes, if it had meant a general raising of his standard. But this was far from being the case. Only a very small proportion of the working men had risen to prominence—some ten or at most fifteen thousand of them, compared to all the millions of the working class.

Under our eyes a new class of nobles had formed. Already, by 1935, it had taken final shape. We were the witnesses of the birth of a new upper stratum of a workers' aristocracy, the prospect of belonging to which, from the middle thirties, began to attract many an intelligent young man.

The captain of industry from the South said that he fully agreed with me. 'I have always thought,' he said, 'that you should be transferred from the Academy to the Institute of Communist Professors; you should take up sociology seriously and lash out against this resurgence of classes.' But when I suggested that since he was a full delegate to the conference he might himself say something on the matter, he claimed to be 'only a mediocrity', and drew in his horns.

Then the head of the Moscow factory, a youngish man of exceptional drive who had been 'mobilised' by the Party out of the Army into industry, said calmly that perhaps it was better not to discuss such matters at all. One should not always think in critical terms. Everything was in a state of flux. Even Stalin was subject to change. The country's affairs were beginning to prosper. No doubt in time we should see the social structure becoming more liberal. As he

saw it, the Party and the people were steadily fusing into one organic whole. Therefore why not stop attacking Stalin, why not give the great leader time and see what things looked like when his designs were completed.

If this is what a man who was 'almost an oppositionist' was beginning to say in November, 1935, what was to be expected of the other ninety-nine per cent of the conference, who had never been oppositionists? When Stalin appeared in the hall no shreds of illusion were left in us. The same scenes were repeated as I had already witnessed in my own military world.

NOTE TO CHAPTER FOUR

I wish to make it clear that I am not against the Western Nations having diplomatic relations with the Kremlin. What I am against is the purchase of short-term understanding at the cost of subordinate peoples and potential revolutionary movements. Those who, at great risk, fight against the Kremlin dictatorship from within require moral support, but those who receive it are persons outside the Soviet Union and often men who fought with the Nazi dictator.

But, it may be asked, are there in fact any revolutionary forces within the U.S.S.R. and if so, have they ever done anything?

There is no mass movement but there is a tremendous latent force which the active revolutionaries strive to develop. There have been many and varied oppositionist groupings. The first was that of Yenukidze, Sheboldayev and Metelyov. The long list of those killed in purges suggest many others. In 1934 there was a plot to start a revolution by arresting the whole of the Stalinist-packed 17th Congress of the Party. In 1942 there was the armed uprising of the North Caucasian peoples, more especially of the Chechen nation, who tried to establish their independence against both Stalin and Hitler. These are representative instances of opposition.

Admittedly many of the oppositionists are not in sympathy with the West. But must all the fault for this attitude be laid at their door? What interest has the West taken in the subordinated nations? What publicity for instance did Stalin's policy of genocide in the North Caucasus ever receive in the West? How easily, by the use of the name Russia, do Western journalists lead their readers to forget the existence of the other members of the U.S.S.R. and thereby serve the purpose of the Kremlin's State-monopolistic imperialism!

OPPOSITION CONFERENCE

AT THIS time Leon Feuchtwanger, Bernard Shaw and Romain Rolland were writing articles and making after-dinner speeches about Stalin's 'revolutionary Socialism', and Beatrice and Sydney Webb declared in their book that Stalin's collective State was a 'new Civilisation'.

Of course, none of them was ever trusted by the Kremlin, who were particularly suspicious of the self-declared and fervent friends of the U.S.S.R. For instance, during his visit the German writer Feuchtwanger was invited to meet the students of Moscow, but though I was eager to try out my German on a real Berliner, Comrade X forbade me to be present.

'Keep away from him,' he said. 'Take it from me that Feuchtwanger is under permanent surveillance and every person who meets him is listed. . . .'

The Stalin Constitution played a large part in deceiving the Webbs and the Feuchtwangers.

I had been through a long period of hard study and intense strain. But early in the New Year Todorsky sent me to a Rest House: 'Take it more quietly, old man. You must keep calm when the fanatics are at you. Stop blazing away at small game, you need your energy for other things. Now off you go to Marfino. Spend every minute of your leave with the girls. Get me? Nothing but girls—no politics, no scientific work!'

The snow was deep and dry, the ski-ing good. Two other officers went with me—to share my room and to spy on me. Fortunately they liked 'the girls' better than I did, so they soon began to leave me alone. But though I had intended to keep to male company, I found myself taken up with the delightful young wife of a Volga lieutenant, and we went ski-ing together.

We were moving slowly down a pinewood track, to all appearances a young couple enjoying one another's company. Suddenly Kapa asked: 'Grisha, are you a Party member?'

I laughed.

'At the moment I am only a man on skis, my dear Kapa,' I said. 'Must we have political talk? Let's enjoy all this!'

'Is being a man on skis more important than being a Party member?' she demanded.

I had not had to press Kapa very hard to come with me, and could hardly believe my ears. I answered quietly: 'Of course not, Kapa, I did not say nature was more important than the Party.'

'One might have thought so,' she snapped.

'Take it as you like,' I laughed.

But she flushed with anger and shot me a murderous glance. I felt like the young man in the folk-tale, who walks along a forest path with his girl, when all at once she turns into a viper barring the road!

Why drag the Party into our outing, I complained. She called me an *obyvatel*,¹ something almost worse than a bourgeois.

'Oh, all right, Kapa darling,' I said. 'I *am* a Party member.'

'Then you might have said so at once. Have you got your new card yet? Have you been through the check?'

She saw me hesitate.

'I see you are an alien element,' she said, scornfully.

'Oh no, I come of a working-class family and I started life as a worker myself.'

'A Trotskyist?'

'No, I am an enemy of Trotskyism.'

'A Zinovievist?'

'I never had anything in common with them.'

'A right opportunist?'

'No.'

'A bourgeois nationalist?'

'No, Kapa.'

'Then . . . Then you are seriously an enemy of the people? Or a spy?' And she turned and made off as fast as she could.

One had to have a label. If Yezhov's Party check-up was slow about renewing my card, it must be that I was an undesirable. How far this was from the world of free men and women of which so many of us had once dreamed! Yezhov's rule had already corroded the heart of the new generation.

Early in the spring of 1936 I had another jolt. In the Comsomol, as in the Party, there were men who represented a sort of old guard, a corps of veterans. I was one of these, and, since membership of the Party did not preclude one from taking an interest in the Comsomol, I continued to be active in it and was head of the Agitprop

¹ *Obyvatel*: a man who merely 'stays' or exists in a place, without shouldering the responsibilities of a citizen.—*Translator*.

section of the Zhukovsky Academy Comsomol Bureau. The Comsomol was proud of me: my name was often in the press, particularly the Air Force journal, *Vperiod y Vishe*, where, from 1936 until the war, I think I was given more space than anybody else. And when, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Comsomol, prizes were offered for the best scientific studies and some 6,000 works were sent in to the jury from all over the country, mine was given fourth place out of the 600 that were chosen for mention.

Now I acquired new labels. Scum yesterday, I became 'a gifted child of the Comsomol', a 'walking encyclopaedia' and a 'born inventor'. Voroshilov, People's Commissar of Defence, pinned the Red Army decoration *otlichnik* (distinguished) on my tunic. The head of the Academy presented me with an engraved watch, the G.O.C. of the Air Force with a collection of books, and the head of my faculty with an engraved slide rule.

It looked for the moment as if all my tails were forgotten. I was a respectable member of society, the youngest member of the Scientific Council, and I was made head of the second aeronautical experimental and research centre in the country. The Comsomol claimed my successes as due to the way it had 'reared' me.

In April Gorshenin, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Comsomol, sent for me. He received me very politely and said: 'As you know, Comrade Tokaev, in a few days the tenth Congress of the Comsomol starts, and we of the Secretariat have decided to ask you to make a speech of welcome to the delegates. You are a veteran member of the Comsomol, the Comsomol has brought you up; you are a member of the Military Academy and an officer in the Air Force; you are well developed politically and a good speaker; you are a sportsman and a parachutist, and you are also a *natzmen* . . .'

It was like a slap in the face! Another label. *Natzmen* is a portmanteau word for a member of a 'national minority'.¹ And with this derogatory term, my enthusiasm vanished. It was an unpardonable insult not only to myself but to the idea of the Revolution and I made this plain to Gorshenin. Had not the Revolution wiped out the taint of lesser nationalities and made us all equal?

I am told that many Western readers may think that I was unnecessarily touchy, that other countries have national minorities, and that there is nothing derogatory in the term. But I was not protesting against *the existence* of national groups, merely against

¹ *Natzionalnoye menshinstvo*.

the prevailing attitude towards them. There is nothing wrong with being a 'native' of a country, but 'native' is a term which I believe civilised Englishmen have ceased to use because of its associations. It need hardly be recalled that in Tsarist days, 'national minorities' were treated as subjects of a lesser order, nor had this tradition been broken with in fact. If there were still national 'minorities' in the U.S.S.R., that logically meant that there was also a super-nationality—the Russians, the *natzbols*,¹ even though the Russians constituted only about half the total population of the Soviet Union. I believed in a voluntary, equal and fraternal co-existence of all nations without any *natzmen* or *natzbol* labels. I considered that when I was in Moscow I was in my homeland, but in *their* eyes, in Moscow I apparently had propaganda value for the Comsomol because I was a distinguished young scientist *in spite of* being only a *natzmen*.

There is more point to this than many at once realise.

To create the illusion that no nationalities problem existed was one of the principal aims of the Stalin Constitution, and the allegedly free and open discussion of the Constitution draft in 1936 had been the occasion of one of the greatest drives of Stalinist propaganda as well as an opportunity for the opposition to try to influence the course of legislation.

The draft proclaimed 'the highest and most advanced form of democracy', and was regarded in the West as evidence that in its own way the Soviet Union was becoming more liberal. But it is always important to read the Soviet press thoroughly: though in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* one read that, from now on, the non-Russian autonomous republics and regions would have real independence, the radio and press continued to call for the unmasking of all 'bourgeois-nationalists', a general label for any who asserted their own national rights.

The summer drew on and a certain military academy in Moscow completed its end-of-year examinations. The pupils began to prepare for practical work in the factories. A number were detailed to Leningrad, others to Gorki and Kharkov, while some were to stay in Moscow. One of them had just packed and was leaving to catch a train to Gorki when an order was handed to him to report to one of the senior officers.

'Well, Comrade, what do you think of things now?' asked the officer, putting the question without any military formality. The

¹ *Natzionalnoye bolshinstvo* national majority.

summons was not from the Army but from this young man's underground movement.

'You mean, what do I think of the draft Constitution?'

'Not only that. Do you mean to say you don't know that a demonstration trial of Zinoviev and Kameniev is being prepared?'

'I've heard of it, but officially I know nothing.'

'Neither do I, officially . . . What do you intend to do about it? Sit on the fence?'

'It's difficult to say, Comrade *Nachalnik*,¹ I am supposed to be going to a factory at Gorki for practical work.'

'You have lost weight, Comrade,' said the *Nachalnik*. 'One might almost think you were in love. Don't you think it would be better to go South, to the Crimea? Comrade X thinks that might be more useful than practical work in a factory. You will be issued with official directives changing your instructions, so off you go at once to the Crimea and do your practical work there, at factory No. 45 . . . Agreed?'

'Agreed, Comrade *Nachalnik*.'

'Good. I didn't expect you to refuse. But that's not all. Comrade X asked me to give you his best wishes . . . The control centre has decided to give you the glorious under-cover name of Demokratov!'

The implication of these words was moving and terrifying. That under-cover name was not only an honour. It was also a burden. It meant inevitable personal danger and hardship. Both the *Nachalnik* and Demokratov understood it in this sense.

This was two days after the draft Constitution had appeared—June 14th, 1936. Demokratov flew South by an ordinary air line, with one halt at Dnepropetrovsk. In the evening of June 17th he dined in the canteen of the factory to which he had been detailed.

Through other channels Riz had been informed of his arrival and was impatiently awaiting the documents he brought. These consisted of an analysis of the expected trial of Zinoviev, Kameniev and their associates, but also of their critical views on the Stalin draft Constitution and their counter-suggestions. These were the work of the leaders of the united right-wing military underground of Moscow under the general directive of a man whose name is familiar to most of my readers. I was not one of those leaders, but perhaps it is easier to use the pronoun 'we' to indicate the opposition which I served.

¹ *Nachalnik*: chief, commanding officer, superior—a general word for a man in a position of superior authority and commonly used by subordinates when addressing such a man, hence also used here by the officer cadet, even when addressing his superior officer in his private capacity.—*Translator*.

Stalin had caught us all at a disadvantage. There had been much talk of a new Constitution, but none of us had really believed that the Kremlin could produce it so rapidly. We had to go into action immediately. If we expressed no views about such high explosive as the Constitution, what would the rank and file of the opposition think of its leadership? If our name was to count for anything we must take up the challenge. Consequently, each at great risk, our men had at once been sent in all directions to organise our counter-blast.

Demokratov performed the work assigned to him among men of the Black Sea Fleet and at Aircraft Factory No. 45. Only two people knew at what tension he lived in those days: Klava Yeryomenko and Riz. In a month, together with his Crimean comrades, he had worked up the Moscow underground suggestions into a draft counter-constitution from the Moscow notes.

On July 28th, six weeks after the publication of Stalin's draft, a small underground conference was held in a Crimean town, with Riz in the chair. The Agenda was: 1. The country's internal condition and international position in connection with the forthcoming Zinoviev-Kameniev-Yevdokimov trial. 2. The opposition draft-constitution. 3. Organisational matters. Riz led the discussion on points 1 and 3. Then he called on 'Comrade Demokratov' to lead the discussion of the Constitution. There was a stir of excitement at the mention of the name. Riz called on the assembly to rise for a minute of silence in tribute to the first Demokratov, who had given his life the year before. Then Demokratov the second spoke. Since his analysis seems to have a practical political relevance even today, I shall give it in some detail.

He reviewed the history of the draft Constitution and the difference between the views of Stalin and those of Bukharin who was undoubtedly responsible for at least part of Stalin's draft. Stalin aimed at one party dictatorship and complete centralisation. Bukharin envisaged several parties and even nationalist parties, and stood for the maximum of decentralisation. He was also in favour of vesting authority in the various constituent republics and thought that the more important of these should even control their own foreign relations. By 1936, Bukharin was approaching the social democratic standpoint of the left-wing socialists of the West. However, we were still deeply divided from him on many questions.

The publication of this draft, said Demokratov, was a good thing in itself, and we should be prepared to support every clause in it which, however minutely, made for democratisation. Once the Constitution was law, every man would have at least the legal right

to fight for the letter of it. As against this, however, must be set the two-faced policy of 'honey-cakes' and terrorisation. The Constitution could be used to deceive public opinion and to implement still more ruthless and arbitrary rule. The self-awareness of the Soviet nations could be drugged by it, the individual's vigilance relaxed. In a country which had no comparative standard of democracy, it might serve to develop mental automatism to a fabulous degree.

Equally dangerous could be its effects, in deceiving foreign opinion and in arming the international agents of the Kremlin, the 'fraternal' communist parties abroad, with a new propaganda weapon. Demokratov in those remote days saw in the Stalin Constitution not the sign of that 'new civilisation' which the Webbs were soon to discover, but a menace to the rest of the world. It was, he said, clearly intended as an instrument of world revolution. This had been indicated by Stetsky (then Head of the Agitprop) when he claimed in a recently published book that 'our Constitution pronounces the ineluctable death sentence of capitalism'. It had a strategic importance in those countries for whose ultimate 'liberation' the Politbureau had now formulated its plans: Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Esthonia, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Iran. There was now open talk, said Demokratov, of 'gathering in the eternal Russian lands', and this meant not the expansion of Communism through the spreading of ideas, but imperialist expansion by force of arms. It was because the Kremlin had decided on such adventures that it offered this giant honey-cake of a new democratic Constitution.

Our eyes were not closed in 1936, even if eminent foreign observers were deceived.

Demokratov then dealt with the name of the country, 'U.S.S.R.' This had been first introduced in 1922 but was now to be confirmed by the new Constitution. There, he said, we were completely in agreement, for indeed, the country was, or should be, not 'Russia' but a 'Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics'.

He then took each of the four words in turn, and as this is of crucial importance, I must give it in full detail.

The word for Union in Russian is *Soyuz*; the prefix *so* stresses the meaning of co-operation between equals. Indeed, Section 13 of the Constitution is explicit that the country is not a single nation state but a *Union* of juridically sovereign states whose equality it guarantees.

The next word, *Soviet*, again embodies 'so'; it is a word used according to the context for 'council' or 'advice'. Everything at

the outset of the Revolution was based on the principle of *soviétovanye*, 'taking counsel', i.e. free discussion between equals in the local Soviets. These councils, made up of direct representatives of the community—not a far-off centralised oligarchy—were to rule the country.

Thus the words 'Union' and 'Soviet' fully embodied the original principles of the Revolution—co-operation between equal nation-states, and government by discussion. Our misfortune, Demokratov said, was that though the name remained, the reality was very different.

This was true also of 'socialist', and I must say a word about this aspect of the U.S.S.R.

I am particularly anxious not to be misunderstood on this point. I am no longer in the U.S.S.R. but many thousands like me are still there; it is important for them not to be misrepresented to the free world and particularly to the social democrats of the West. It was officially claimed that our united republics were socialist and we of the opposition were often accused of being willing to sacrifice socialism if by so doing we could get rid of Stalin and his rule. This suggestion was utter nonsense. We were never against genuine socialism. We were only against Stalin's sinister caricature of the idea.

Personally, I am not a socialist. In my view of life and society, man could get on quite well without the notions of socialism. There is nothing sacrosanct about them. But not being a socialist is not at all the same thing as being an anti-socialist.

I am a non-socialist because I believe that the truth embodied in Rousseau's saying, 'Man, be thyself', cannot be realised by concentrating exclusively on that aspect of human relationships to which socialism devotes its entire attention. But as I see life, it would be nonsense to adopt an anti-socialist standpoint. *The revolutionary democratic movement is close to the democratic socialists.* I have worked in close co-operation with many convinced socialists, such as Kurt Schumacher with whom, though we disagreed on points of principle, I agreed on many aspects of society. I am not ashamed of having published articles in the *Berlin Telegraph* and the *New York Socialist Herald*. Such names as Attlee, Bevin, Spaak and Blum mean something to humanity. So do features of Scandinavian society. And the part played by the international workers' movement against Stalinism has permanent significance.

All this we recognised. Nevertheless, in 1936, we were forced, as Demokratov put it, to 'take up the anti-socialist sword' and to

hate with all our souls everything in our country which was labelled socialism. Of course, it was not socialism as such that we were fighting, but Stalin's counter-revolutionary distortion of socialism—State-monopolistic imperialism.

It was for this system—State-monopolistic imperialism—that Stalin's draft Constitution created the juridical basis. It set out the structure of absolute centralisation of power coupled with ownership and administration of all means of production by the State. Such State monopoly, an economic system essentially indistinguishable from capitalism, inevitably led to expansionism, and thus to imperialism.

Finally, Demokratov came to the question whether our country was a 'Republic'. In the sense that nobody wanted to restore the pre-revolutionary monarchy, yes. But could such a negative definition be acceptable to anyone except the Stalinist?

He suggested that the U.S.S.R. *was* a republic and that this was the only part of the original conception of our country which had persisted.¹

The conference concluded, Riz called on us all to 'take up this last decisive battle' and 'fight to the bitter end'.

On paper this still looks very brave. In reality, even then the more we considered the position, the more Sisyphean the task looked. We were like rabbits scratching at a mountain, as if this could bring the granite masses tumbling down. We achieved nothing but local landslides in which handfuls of us were engulfed.

It was about the middle of August that I again went south to the Crimea and that the blow fell. Having consistently demanded of each of us the maximum of self-sacrifice in 'this last, decisive battle', Riz suddenly issued new instructions which threw us all into the greatest consternation.

'Immediately curtail all forms of struggle against Stalin,' ran his message. 'From now on take part in all Party and other assemblies with vigorous pro-Stalinist speeches and lavish praise of the proposed new Constitution.'

I could scarcely believe my eyes. *Sauve qui peut!* Drowning men, clutch at your straws!

What had happened was this. Our underground centre in Moscow

¹ Today I think differently. If republicanism means that the supreme authority in the State is elective and that the holder of it is responsible to the community, then the U.S.S.R. is *not* a republic. Indeed, it would be hard to find a country less republican; for here, power is concentrated in the hands of a small oligarchy which never has to account for its work, and is 'elected' only in an outrageously farcical sense.

had got news through to Riz that earlier than we could have expected the volcano was about to erupt. There had been serious Kremlin convulsions, and the Inner Politbureau, with Yezhov and Malenkov running it, had won.

Only a few hours later, Moscow radio announced that the 'Trotskyists and Zinovievists, those accursed enemies of the people', 'men ready for any foul act', were still busy 'spying', and these 'professional scoundrels' had finally sunk to 'the slime of White-Guardism' and turned into the 'vanguard of the International counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie'. In Dniepropetrovsk, the NKVD had discovered that such 'born scoundrels' as N. G. Generalov (Shura's husband), though they took formal oaths of loyalty to the Party, had in fact organised 'spy nests and Trotskyist underground groups'. They were working for 'world capitalism'.

The announcement continued: 'Up till now the Dniepropetrovsk Party Committee has been headed by contemptible counter-revolutionary agents, Trotskyists and Zinovievists, enemies of the people, revolting monsters, loathsome vermin. Those born enemies of the people, Lentzner and Krasnoy, were specially invited to Dniepropetrovsk to carry on their treacherous work against the Party and the Soviet State. The slightest trace of liberalism towards such vile double-dealers . . .' And so on, and so on. 'Vigilance! The enemy is in our midst! Death to the enemies of the people! Long live the most democratic Constitution in the world! Long live our wise leader and teacher, Comrade Stalin!'

Even though the importance accorded to these new arrests did at least suggest that we were a power to be reckoned with the news was tragic for us. Ironically, the Kremlin announcement concluded with a record of the song:

A vast expanse it is, my native land,
Its rivers, plains and forests without end,
I know no other country far or near
Where man can breathe as free as he can here.

THE NKVD TAKE AN INTEREST IN ME

IN AUGUST, 1936, we all walked under a cloud. Generalov and Lentzner had gone. Who could tell what else the NKVD knew? I myself had every reason to be worried. Though my visit to Dniepropetrovsk the year before had been given ample cover by the openness with which I had dealt with Katya's case, it was likely that the enemy knew that I had stayed with the Generalovs.

I now spent most of my time with Klava Yeryomenko. We did our best to play the carefree couple. We spent many hours on the sea-shore, watching the steamers and sailing ships. Klava was frankly afraid.

'The awful truth,' she said, 'is that this terror-drive is already becoming a permanent part of Soviet policy, a planned State undertaking.'

My own conclusion was that the time for delay was past. We must make immediate preparations for a general armed uprising.

I was sure then, as I am today, that if Comrade X had chosen to send out a call to arms, he would have been joined at once by many of the big men of the U.S.S.R. In 1936, Alksnis, Yegorov, Osepyan and Kashirin would have joined him. But Comrade X did not consider the time ripe for an uprising.

'Grisha,' said Klava, 'could you make a bomb?' She was in deadly earnest, and, with feminine matter-of-factness, she added: 'It must be both small and powerful.'

Through my mind flashed a succession of Russian terrorists of the past, women among them. No other country had so persistent a tradition of assassination as ours. Passionlessly, Klava Yeryomenko had come to the conclusion that she should take her place in that tradition. Her plan was one of stark simplicity. Stalin would come down to his palace at nearby Gagry. She would gain entry. When the principal tyrants were gathered together, she would destroy them. She too would perish, but they would be no more. She already knew officers of Stalin's bodyguard who could be won over. A clever woman, she said, could get what she wanted, especially

if she was also good-looking. With the disappearance of Stalin, Molotov and Yezhov, Comrade X could then seize the Kremlin and the principal government offices; Riz would take command of the Black Sea Fleet; Belinsky and Demokratov together would control Leningrad; Sheboldayev and Gunushvili would take over the Caucasus; Generalov the Ukraine, and so on. In two or three days it would all be over, the country would be in the hands of the new men. The people would heave a tremendous sigh of relief. Oh, revolutionary romanticism, how entrancing and deceptive you are!

Of course the bomb could be made—we had experts among us. That would be the simplest part of the whole business. But ‘taking possession of the Kremlin’ was not so simple. Astonishing though this may be to the serious-minded, there seem still to be men in the Western world who imagine that assassination would be a liberating force. I have been reproached in an American paper for not trying my hand at it.

Nevertheless, although in principle we were opposed to terroristic acts, I considered it right, in the changed situation, to put Klava’s proposal before Comrade X. He gave it serious thought, but in the end rejected the suggestion. He pointed out that there had already been no less than fifteen attempts to assassinate Stalin, none had got near to success, each had cost many brave lives. ‘There is a right place and time for everything,’ he said, ‘but now (in mid-1936), with mass automatism of the mind, Yeryomenko’s suggestion is out of place. When the time does come, we shall take the necessary steps. But those will be exclusively political, ideological, organisational—morally permissible steps. We are not a band of murderers, but the vanguard of those who are opposed by principle to this régime.’

Comrade X also informed me that many of the leading cadres of our movement were now under arrest, and new arrests were expected daily. We discussed the arrest of Generalov, and the possible repercussions for myself. Comrade X reassured me. It appeared that Petrenko had given evidence that I was a ‘Stalinist fanatic’!

Finally, Comrade X reminded me that we could still to some extent influence the course of these ‘exposures’. The fewer grounds Stalin had for accusing any of us of Trotskyism, the easier for us to do so much against him.

One evening, soon after this, Klava, two naval officers and myself were sitting in a small private house in the Black Sea port of ‘Holland’. A half-eaten meal was on the table—a rough Crimean draught red wine, smoked lobster and black Navy rye

bread. A party, not a political meeting. All at once, there was a banging at the door, and in came Major Zybin, a naval commissar. He was acquainted with our host who welcomed him warmly. But the commissar was out for blood and made a caustic remark about the other's conduct in holding drinking parties 'with women' in his apartment. This enraged Klava, who turned angrily on Zybin. Our host could not prevent a quarrel, and Zybin demanded to see our papers. Now it was my turn to be indignant. Zybin's behaviour was scandalous, and I pointed out to him that he had no authority to demand papers in a private house as though he were a policeman. Klava dressed him down again for his lack of manners—and, with a last threat—'Comrade Yeryomenko, don't forget who I am'—he left.

It was Saturday. Klava and I crossed the bay to Sevastopol late that night. To reach my hostel, I had to take a cutter across a second bay. But for some reason Klava insisted that I stay the night with her. To her there was nothing scandalous in this; we were very old friends, almost brother and sister; we were not lovers. She had only one room, and she slept in her bed, I on the divan. At about four o'clock we were awakened by a loud knock.

We knew of course who it was: the NKVD. Klava's mind worked like lightning. While she was still asking loudly who was there, she pulled me into bed beside her. If they found us sleeping separately, they would at once be more suspicious. There could only be a political reason for two young people to sleep separately.

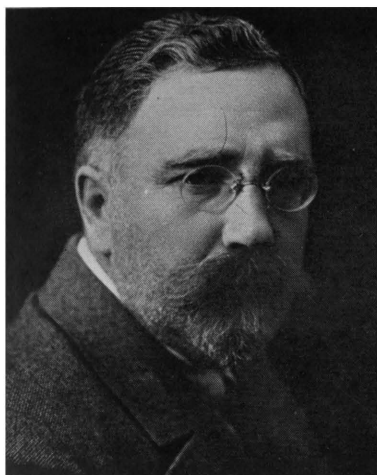
Klava's presence of mind saved me twice over. We were under orders from Riz to burn all potential evidence. But I was still young and careless. I had preserved a highly incriminating scrap of paper. Klava knew this and in the twinkling of an eye she had it hidden on her person.

There were two of them, one in civilian clothes, an agent of the local NKVD operational section, the other an ordinary Sevastopol policeman.

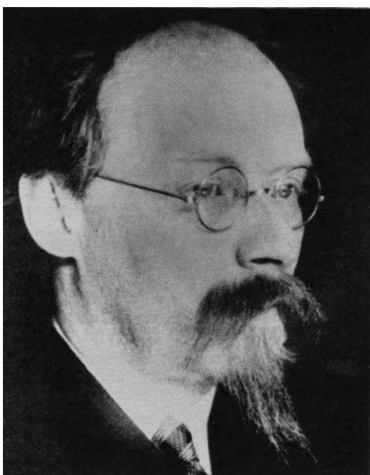
'Is your name Tokaev?' asked the NKVD man politely.

'Why spoil your own night and somebody else's, to find that out?' I asked, but he insisted, still courteously. I indicated where my papers were and told him he could take them out of my tunic himself. If I did not object, he would also like my pistol. I had it under the pillow, and handed it to him. He unloaded it carefully, and asked me to go with him to his headquarters.

So, some time between five and six, I crossed the threshold of the Sevastopol NKVD and entered the large room used for preliminary enquiries. There was a naked electric light bulb and a number of



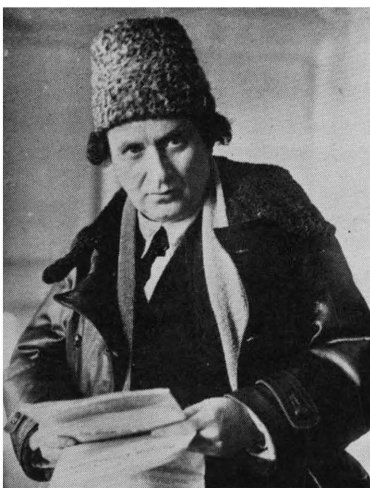
Kamenev



Piatakov



Radek



Zinoviev

ordinary hard chairs and a small, bare table. There were no iron bars over the windows, but the whole building stood inside a high courtyard wall closely studded with broken glass and guarded by sentries. At the door stood an ordinary soldier, armed with a pistol. I was told to sit and wait. I took a chair into a corner, drew my officer's cloak round me and dozed till some time between eight and nine.

At last a tall, thin fellow with a non-Russian accent, which I could not place, came in. He was not in uniform, nor did his manner suggest that he had ever worn one. He was obviously a preliminary political investigator.

'Good morning, Comrade *Kommandir*,' he began, politely recognising my rank. 'Well the first thing is—have you a cigarette? If so, let's smoke. We've got plenty of time. Hm! What a life it is!'

I had cigarettes, and we smoked. My interrogator settled himself down on a creaky chair and, clasping his hands behind his head, leant back.

'Well, come on, Comrade *Kommandir*,' he said at last, 'let's get on with it. Akh! I'm fed up to the teeth, the same thing over and over again, a thousand times.'

'Yes, let's clear things up, Comrade Prosecutor,' I replied.

'Prosecutor? I'm not a prosecutor. Can't abide them. Rotten crowd. All sections and paragraphs. Heartless fellows. No, I'm only a preliminary investigator on the political side. A Party-thousand man in fact. What a life! Never even let me finish my studies, mobilised me for this dirty, miserable job. I understand you're from Moscow, Comrade *Kommandir*?'

'That's right.'

'Moscow, Moscow . . .' he cried, yearningly. 'I've never once managed to get to Moscow . . . To tell you the truth, I don't like this job.'

'Then don't do it.'

'You will have your little joke, Comrade *Kommandir*. Are you a Party member? Hm, then you ought to know what a Party-thousand is. Well, what's your surname?'

'Tokaev.'

'Christian name?'

'Grigori.'

'Patronymic?'

'Alexandrovich.'

'Year of birth?'

'1909.'

And off we went. What countless times I have answered these

standard questions, filled in questionnaires, written the outline of my life! But at last it was over, and the first significant question was put.

'Comrade Tokaev, I wonder if you've ever happened to be in Dniepropetrovsk?'

A load fell from my mind. This was easier. I had been afraid he would ask me about the Black Sea Fleet, as, the afternoon before, one of Zybin's first questions had been: 'How can I be sure you are not discussing the distribution of illegal leaflets to the Fleet?' They seemed to be hot on our trail, but they had apparently lost it again. I was so relieved that involuntarily I showed it by some movement, by my expression, for I saw a flash of understanding in the investigator's eyes. I was sure he guessed. But, to my amazement, he took absolutely no notice, and went on about Dniepropetrovsk. I was very frank in my answers. Yes, I had made a trip there last year. I had also been there again this year. But what was suspicious about that? Was I not a citizen of the U.S.S.R. and an officer of the Red Army? Hadn't I a perfect right to help Katya Okman? Was it my fault if my passenger-line aircraft touched down at Dniepropetrovsk and gave me time to call on my friends?

'But did you really not know that Generalov was a Trotskyist?' he asked.

'Of course I did. Everybody knew, including the Central Committee of the Party. It's also not a secret that I'm not a Trotskyist. No, no, I called on them because Generalov is an old friend, and also because I simply couldn't find a bed anywhere else. As for political talk, obviously I couldn't talk politics with the Generalovs, because we differed so fundamentally in our views.'

It was curious as a police investigation. More and more I got the impression that my investigator was not really in the least interested in the Generalovs, but only hovered round that subject for fear I might blurt out some other detail leading in a more dangerous direction which he would feel obliged to follow up. Everything I said was written down carefully; the armed guard listened too, most attentively.

'And so, let's get on. . . . I quite understand you'd rather not be wakened at four in the morning . . . especially with such a charming bed-fellow . . . Got another cigarette? Sorry, I forgot to buy any on the way here. You chaps from Moscow always have plenty, and you're so generous . . . Now then—ever had meetings with Levitan? No? Good. Let's put that down.'

And as he wrote, he slowly spelt the words out: 'Never had occasion to meet Levitan apart from official business. No, don't

interrupt, it's better put like that, less trouble for you, and for me. Levitan was an awful scoundrel—damned Trotskyist, you know, anybody in Dniepropetrovsk could tell you that. As for women, well . . . as I say, awful scoundrel . . . Sevastopol's a good place, you know, especially for an old bachelor like me . . .'

He told me a sordid story of how he had slept with the wife of a sea-captain who came home a day early, but had got away all right . . .

I retorted that if he wanted to find a scoundrel, he had better look in his own skin, but he was not in the least put out. On the contrary, he found my remark an excuse to spread himself on the delights of a snug bed, naked shoulders peeping from lace night-gowns and so on.

And that was the end of that; soon afterwards I left the NKVD headquarters a free man. Whatever else might have been behind the interrogator's incompetence, it was obvious that the NKVD's urgent need for expansion was producing very odd results. The situation in Sevastopol changed fundamentally a few months later, when regular Yezhov-Malenkov experts replaced the hastily mobilised amateur stopgaps.

I had been lucky in this brush with the enemy, but it was essential, for the sake of the others, to establish, as soon as possible, what was behind the interrogation. Klava repeatedly wanted reassurance that I had been asked no questions about our propaganda work in the Fleet. She suspected that I was reluctant to admit how serious our general position was. And ought she not to report to Riz that I had been arrested? On no account, I assured her, was Riz to be told any such thing, but only that I had been 'asked to assist' with information about my visits to Dniepropetrovsk.

'But you were arrested, I saw it with my two eyes.'

'No, certainly not,' I insisted. 'You must tell Riz exactly what I suggest.'

My aim was to ensure that in these critical moments there should be no unnecessary aggravation of the uneasiness which we all felt, and which might disturb our work in the Navy. Indeed, when Riz learnt that in my case the NKVD was clearly not on the scent, his instructions to cease operations were cancelled for a narrow circle. We were to be more cautious and work less extensively than before, but the work was to go on.

However, this resumption of underground work was not fated to last long. The NKVD drive gathered momentum and there was an outbreak in both Fleet and Air Force circles of denunciations of 'enemy activity', though so far nobody could say exactly who was

responsible for the distribution of illegal literature. 'Counter-revolutionary' leaflets continued to turn up in the most unexpected places, not many, but sufficient to keep alive a constant vibration of whispers and uncertainty. To combat this, daily meetings and Party assemblies were held on every ship, in every factory and naval or air force institution on land, with the invariable exhortation to 'root out all the vermin', to 'unmask all spies', to 'cauterise away all the enemies of the people'. Riz was now the centre of a tornado of arrests. The situation was becoming untenable and on August 20th instructions came from Comrade X to cease the struggle.

The same day the Soviet radio broadcast the following: 'Yesterday, August 19th, 1936, the Military College of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. proceeded to examine the case of the participants in the Trotskyist-Zinovievist terrorist centre. . . . Devoid of all human characteristics, the vermin Zinoviev, Kameniev, Yevdokimov and their rabble killed Comrade Kirov and planned to kill Comrade Stalin and also Comrades Voroshilov, Zhdanov, Kaganovich, Ordzhonikidze, Kossior and Postyshev. Bandits, spies, thieves, jesuits and loathsome scoundrels, poisoners and destroyers, contemptible vermin and scum—such are the men who are in the dock today! The Soviet land shall be purged of spies and murderers! Vigilance, comrades, vigilance!'

The second great Moscow trial had begun.

TERRORISM BY JUDICIAL TRIAL

TO SECURE his State monopolism Stalin had to silence those senior political leaders who were old associates of Lenin in making the Revolution. While they lived there would always be open discussion, and this was dangerous to him. Stalin could achieve a double purpose by killing them and by extorting, if necessary by torture, monstrous confessions from them.

The process by which he achieved this we know as the Moscow Trials. These trials were never properly reported in the West. Much that was false was taken at its face value. Much play has been made with self-accusation as the manifestation of some peculiar Russian mentality. In fact it was quite difficult for outsiders not to believe that there was 'something in it'. They did not know, as we did, what went on behind the stone walls of the prisons where the accused were 'processed'.

The public trials represent clear stages in Stalin's progress. The first trial (January, 1935) was only a preliminary essay, an act of vengeance against Zinoviev, Kameniev and Yevdokimov for having carried a resolution of no confidence in the Stalin-dominated Politbureau at a Leningrad Party Conference. The assassination of Kirov had provided the excuse for the first trial of strength.

The second trial (August, 1936) used the shaken position of the defendants of the first trial to debase them still further and to discredit the conception of an opposition within the Communist movement. It created a legal foundation for the complete extermination of Stalin's opponents.

The third trial (January, 1937) was intended to consolidate the achievements of the second. By carefully cooked evidence it justified the physical liquidation of the Right wing opposition and the military opposition.

The fourth trial (March, 1938) was the culmination of the destruction of the opposition. Not only did it remove the last of the great men of the Revolution, and indeed all remaining politicians who were capable of menacing Stalin's power, but it discredited them totally, not only in their ideas but also in their characters. It branded them as criminals and traitors ready to sell their country to its enemies.

These four trials were critical factors in the lives of the men of my generation. I was closely informed about all that took place in the preliminary secret investigation for the second trial. Of the large group of men accused Yevdokimov interested me most.

For instance, during the preliminary hearing, he protested that, though he was not a Trotskyist, he had his own ideology and was confident that, if they had the choice, the people would follow him. Therefore, he said, he ought to be allowed to come forward, side by side with Stalin, to see which of them had mass support. But of course the State Prosecutor was engaged to prove him a murderer, not to test his popularity. Vishinsky and Malenkov reminded Yevdokimov that he had far greater freedom in a prison in Soviet Russia than in any bourgeois state; this made him roar with laughter.

Vishinsky: 'Accused Yevdokimov, do you mean to suggest that you are dragooned in the U.S.S.R.?'

Yevdokimov: 'Citizen State Prosecutor, you do not often tell the truth, but this time you have expressed yourself with remarkable pertinence; yes, in the U.S.S.R. we are dragooned, that is what I mean to say. And you know it as well as I do. The only difference between us is that you are boss of the show and I am the victim.'

At this Vishinsky lost his temper and shouted that Yevdokimov and his associates would be stamped out like vermin.

Yevdokimov: 'But of course, and that will only go to prove what sort of a régime we have. But, Citizen Prosecutor, don't forget that those who come after us will denounce you as renegades and counter-revolutionary betrayers of the workers. They will call you double-faced hypocrites and professional assassins.'

Yevdokimov not only defended himself, he lashed out. He was a high-principled man, who had the interests of the people at heart.

Why, then, did he, in open court, so abjectly agree with his accusers? The reason is simple: there is a limit to the powers of resistance of the human organism. I can give the exact date when Yevdokimov broke down: it was on August 10th, 1936, *only ten days before the trial*. By then Yevdokimov had been under 'treatment' in prison for some eighteen months. He had been subjected to carefully chosen physical tortures which leave no visible marks. Even so, as Comrade X pointed out to me, Yevdokimov never once made a specific statement about his own actions; the furthest they could drive him in the early part of the trial was to make third-person statements which suited them. 'Mrachkovsky told me . . . Zinoviev thought . . . Kameniev's reaction was . . . Trotsky considered . . .'

What methods Vishinsky's men now used I do not know, but one morning Yevdokimov made this statement:

'At the trial in connection with the assassination of Kirov in 1935,' he said, 'I, Yevdokimov, and also Zinoviev and Kameniev, Bakayev and Gertik, deceived the officers of the régime and the court by concealing that Kirov's assassination was planned exclusively by us, participants in the Trotskyist-Zinovievist bloc. In the decision to murder Kirov, I myself took part as well as Zinoviev and Kameniev, Bakayev, Mrachkovsky and Ter-Vaganian.

'In the autumn of 1934, I know from Bakayev himself that, together with a certain Trotskyist terrorist, whose name I do not know, he went from Moscow to Leningrad to establish contact with the Leningrad terrorist headquarters in order to murder Kirov. Bakayev and the Trotskyist terrorist had a meeting with Nikolayev and agreed with him about the plan for the assassination of Kirov . . .'

To the novice this sounds convincing. It is at least a 'smear' suggesting that these people must have been mixed up in the plot. But it was completely clear to us that these were not Yevdokimov's words. We knew Yevdokimov and he knew what we would think. Though broken by torture and drugs, he knew we would never forget the eighteen months during which he had stood firm. He knew we would realise he was reciting words put into his mouth.

I know better than any man who was seen in Leningrad with Bakayev—it so happens that the 'Trotskyist terrorist' who at this time was with Bakayev in Leningrad *has never been a Trotskyist*. (The Kremlin gentry would like to get him, even now.) Nor has he ever been a terrorist. Nor did Bakayev travel from Moscow to Leningrad with this individual 'whose name I do not know'; the two met in Leningrad by chance, to be precise, at the entrance to the Uritzky Palace. Further Yevdokimov also spoke of a 'conference' at Zinoviev's country villa at Ilinsk, near Moscow; whereas in the first place there was only a chance meeting on a holiday and Yevdokimov was not there at all as he had not left Moscow, and Bakayev left the villa before the conference, not after or as a result of it. (Am I right in my details, Comrade X?) That Yevdokimov was monstrously slandered should be plain when I state that it so happened that on the very eve of Kirov's assassination Yevdokimov issued an implacable order to his followers that they were 'to cauterise away' any trace of the ideology of individual terrorism, even against the bosses of the Kremlin.

I do not pretend that the accused were all of the calibre of Yevdokimov. Mrachkovsky, for instance, was an unpleasant personality, who had never had many friends. A small man and a coward, he willingly played his captors' game, possibly imagining that he would thereby escape death. It was Mrachkovsky, for

instance, who gave evidence of a 'united Trotskyist-Zinovievist' movement, which, in fact, had never existed.

Zinoviev and Kameniev, however, were both big and little; big as revolutionaries, but petty and weak in character. However, there is some evidence that they persuaded themselves that their self-sacrifice in the dock was to the advantage of the revolution throughout the world. But alas, the key to Zinoviev's case was that he had already, at first, I think, involuntarily, betrayed some of his comrades and had so entangled himself in treachery that he became an easy tool at the trial.

Zinoviev was one of the Party's principal founders; he had been a member since 1903. He had been leader of the Third International and of the Comintern (as it later became). In court he cut a pitiable figure, yet he was not tortured but only 'processed' psychologically.

Vishinsky: 'So you organised the assassination of Comrade Kirov?'

Zinoviev: 'Yes, we organised the assassination of Kirov.'

Vishinsky: 'You, Kameniev, Smirnov, Mrachkovsky and Ter-Vaganian?'

Zinoviev: 'I, Kameniev, Smirnov, Mrachkovsky and Ter-Vaganian.'

Nevertheless, the trial was not all smooth going. Zinoviev directly accused Smirnov, but Smirnov himself was not a willing mouthpiece. He was another old revolutionary, a very close friend of Bukharin's, but nobody's political adherent; he was a stout individualist communist.

'If you want to shoot me as an opponent of Stalin's, then do it decently, but don't label me a Trotskyist . . . I am just Smirnov,' he said during the preliminary investigation. At the trial, most of the time he behaved like a well-trained actor. They had broken his will. But, like Yevdokimov, he had a clear conscience and he was never broken completely: he could still pull himself together at times and resist in some fashion.

Vishinsky: 'So you were given the task of committing terrorist acts as a means of struggle by Trotsky?'

Smirnov: 'I was given the task of committing terrorist acts as a means of struggle by Trotsky.'

To those who knew Smirnov this was the gramophone record, not the man. Then suddenly Smirnov straightened his back and raised his voice. Those in court exchanged glances. What was Smirnov saying? 'I do not admit that I am guilty,' he cried. 'I do not confess, I repudiate the statements I have made, I will not lie . . .'

The incident was like a bomb explosion. Vishinsky turned scarlet,

grabbed a sheaf of papers and began to gabble a quotation. Did Smirnov deny that? But Smirnov stood in absolute silence, through one challenging question after another. Vishinsky called on Mrachkovsky to testify against Smirnov. And still Smirnov was silent. Then, meaningly, he looked first at Mrachkovsky, then at Vishinsky—and shrugged his shoulders.

They took Smirnov away to the cells. When he next appeared in court he answered dutifully what was required of him.

Of all the accused, sad to relate, Kameniev played the meanest role. He was a man of some merit, clever and knowledgeable. He had done much good work in building up the State administration after the revolution. But he was a moral and physical coward. No wonder he was chosen to speak the words which would prepare the way for the greatest blow of all.

The outside world failed to understand Kameniev's role; indeed it could not be understood without an intimate knowledge of the personalities. For instance, Kameniev stated that in June 1934 he had visited Leningrad to recruit 'an active Zinovievist' for the assassination of Kirov. Now this 'active Zinovievist' was identified as Yakovlev; but in the mid-thirties Yakovlev had no connection with the Zinovievists, a fact well known to Yezhov, Malenkov and Vishinsky. He was a strong supporter of the right-wing Bukharin ideology. And Kameniev's evidence—a fact which Kameniev must have known—was in reality a first shot aimed at Bukharin.

Altogether, Kameniev completed the renegade work of Zinoviev. He stated that in the early thirties, he had kept in close touch with Bukharin, Rykov and Tomskey, the three who formed the opposition group known as Buryto. Thus, in the course of the second Moscow trial, were sewn the seeds of the fourth trial. At the same time, Malenkov took a self-protective step by showing that he, who had earlier inclined towards Bukharin's ideas, if he inclined to any at all, was a stout anti-Bukharinist.

One more piece of evidence to show how low a traitor such as Kameniev could fall.

Vishinsky: 'Accused Kameniev, now will you tell me how to qualify your articles and declarations written in 1933, in which you expressed loyalty to the Party? Deceit?'

Kameniev: 'Worse than deceit.'

Vishinsky: 'Betrayal of faith?'

Kameniev: 'Worse than betrayal of faith.'

Vishinsky: 'Worse than deceit, worse than betrayal of faith. Find the word for yourself, to characterise your conduct. Treachery? Betrayal?'

Kameniev: 'You have found the word.'

I arrived back in Moscow from Sevastopol the very day that these men were shot. The next day there was a special Party assembly in the Academy. I have forgotten who opened it. I only recall a torrent of hysteria—brandishing of clenched fists, and language of indescribable vulgarity. Every Party member, said the chairman, *must* declare himself on this occasion and add his seal to the finding of the court. Off they went, one fanatic after another, only too glad to have so grand an opportunity to rant. What words of praise for the State Prosecutor, Vishinsky! What infinite variations on the theme of scurrility.

Soon, however, one thing became obvious: those Party members who had 'tails' were all rather silent. 'Comrades!' suddenly belowered the chairman. 'We must insist on Party member Yefimov speaking and making a clean breast of his own Trotskyist past!'

What was wanted was that poor Yefimov should satisfy the fanatics' thirst for blood with grovelling self-accusations. If he did this abjectly enough, he might scrape through without more trouble. He was a sturdy little army engineer, an old Party member, but with no less than ten expulsions and reinstatements behind him; indeed, he was so used to it all that normally a moral lynching would have meant nothing to him. But just as he was about to speak the chairman banged the table and shouted: 'One of two things, either you clear up your Trotskyist past once and for all, and we'll give you full measure for your past, or you'll equivocate, and then our glorious Party'll learn you how to deceive!' This proved the last straw to Yefimov's patience.

'Comrades,' he began, 'I protest . . .' In calm, measured tones he protested that he was a Party member of long standing, and we were a highly trained branch consisting almost entirely of men of advanced education: we ought not to put up with the 'hooligan dictates of ignoramuses'. There was a moment of silence, then from the chairman a roar: 'Down with him! Turn him out! Shoot the scoundrel!' The assembly did not stir or utter a word. Yefimov hung his head and slowly went out. The same evening, he was arrested, and I never saw him again, or even learned his fate.

In this atmosphere, there was only one thing for me to do: go with the tide. In any case, I was under the strictest orders from Comrade X to lie low. I spoke for about ten minutes, inwardly burning with shame, feeling that Riz and Klava, Comrade X and others had their eyes on me. I spoke with the utmost concentration, weighing every word. After the assembly Russanov thanked me—not for what I said, but for saying it—for keeping my head and

not offering the enemy a single opening. In my speech, I concentrated on Zinoviev and Kameniev. I avoided all mention of Bukharin. But the chairman would not let this pass: did I or did I not approve of the conclusions Vishinsky had drawn in regard to Bukharin?

Idiotic rhetoric—as if Stalin's State Prosecutor needed my approval! But I said that Vishinsky's decision to investigate the activity of Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky and Uglanov had the approval of the people and the Party, and that I 'completely agreed'—that the 'peoples of the Soviet Union and our Party had the right to know about the two-faced intrigues of Bukharin and Rykov . . .'

In fact I was so positive that no further questions were asked. Now at last in freedom I can state frankly that I was false. But Russanov and others present fully understood, and Comrade X also approved what I had done. None the less there are some younger oppositionists who to this day genuinely think that I supported Vishinsky. When Comrade X reads these lines (as he will), I trust he will explain the truth to those comrades who are still in doubt about my position. I trust too that from this statement alone my other readers will grasp in what a turgid atmosphere, in what an ultra-conspiratorial manner—not even knowing one another's characters—we oppositionists of the U.S.S.R. have to work.

The storm passed. I had gained time, and could get to work again. Before the month had ended, I presented a lengthy underground report on the political situation and the prospects of continuing the fight in the South, particularly in the Black Sea Fleet and the Sevastopol military and naval base. It was a close conference, under the very noses of Yezhov and Malenkov, and Comrade X was in the chair. I also reported on Demokratov's work in preparing a counter-draft of the Constitution. I should add that the conference confirmed Demokratov's under-cover name for a further season.

At the close of the meeting, Comrade X informed me that Bukharin knew not only about my speech against him at the Party assembly, he had also been informed of Demokratov's work in the Crimea. A few days later, on September 4th, I also learned that before he was dismissed from the commission drafting the Constitution, Bukharin had studied the alternative draft prepared by Demokratov and that among the documents were now included a number of important observations based on our work.

THE HUNT GOES ON

BESIDES LENIN, the 'Russian Revolution' had produced one pre-eminent thinker and theoretician. Bukharin had been in the Party since 1904, and, on the eve of the October Revolution, had drawn up the first draft laws of the new State, the very structure of the U.S.S.R. From 1918 to 1921 he was the secretary of the Central Committee of the Party charged with ideological questions. He founded the Communist International, and in 1925 he became chairman of its Executive Committee.

My generation, the 'second generation' of the Revolution, looked to him for guidance, chiefly because of his courage in standing out against Stalin, from the early days of forced collectivisation. He was the leader of the right-wing deviation. Among the original bolsheviks and their disciples, Zinoviev was the extremist of the Left, linking up with Trotsky; Bukharin of the Right, linking up with humanity. It was unthinkable that Bukharin should be accused of treason, terrorism, espionage: for that very reason Stalin had to condemn and destroy Bukharin; to vilify him, not by countering his political arguments, but by proving that he was a common criminal.

On August 25th it was briefly stated in the press that 'Former member of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks) M. P. Tomsky, having become entangled with the terrorist Trotskyist-Zinovievist headquarters, and fearing to answer to a proletarian court, has committed suicide'. That grand old man had hanged himself in his country cottage at Bolshevo, near Moscow.

Tomsky was hounded to his death. He too had been a Party member since 1904, a professional revolutionary who had suffered forced labour imprisonment under the Tsar. Up to 1930 he had been a member of the Politbureau. He had also been head of the Soviet Trade Unions. Latterly he had been chief of the State publishing system, the OGIZ. But Kameniev had smeared him, the whole country was hysterical, and life became unbearable to him. Daily, hourly, he was attacked. Never a word about political opinions; *ad nauseam*, the fanatics, at Party and other meetings, demanded of him 'a straight answer' to whether he had taken part

in assassinating Kirov and planning other assassinations, whether or not he had been a spy, an agent of the fascists, a murderer. It was a form of lynching. With his death the *To* was out of Buryto.

Rykov, another of Lenin's close associates, was the next victim. After Lenin's death he had been the first Chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars and Chairman of Soviet Labour and Defence, and, of course, a member of the Politbureau. He had been in the Party since 1894. But in 1929 he had joined Tomsy and Bukharin in opposing Stalin's policy of 'extraordinary measures', and he was now doomed. Since 1930, when the Buryto group were relieved of their high posts, he had been People's Commissar of Communications. Now he was harried like Tomsy.

Rykov, however, was no Tomsy; he dragged on a miserable existence, till in September he was officially removed from his post, struck off the list of candidates for the Central Committee, dismissed from the Party, and had no other occupation but that of 'vermin'.

On the same day the first step was taken to bring about the downfall of Yagoda. He was removed from the NKVD, and we lost a strong link in our opposition intelligence service.

The wolves were moving in on the victims. The NKVD now headed by Yezhov, took another step forward. The Little Politbureau had penetrated the Yenukidze-Sheboldayev and the Yagoda-Zelinsky conspiracies, and broken through the opposition's links within the central institutions of the political police. They were moving forward cautiously, but inexorably. Yagoda was not at once arrested—he knew too much, including Zinoviev's and Kameniev's reasons for turning traitor to the opposition.

Throughout the country the prisons filled—with former NKVD men, secretaries of Party committees of regions and cities, newspaper editors, engineers, writers, scientists. Let me ask three open questions—the men concerned are alive, in prominent positions, and could answer if they were free to do so.

Soviet aircraft constructor Tupoliev—why were you put in gaol?

Soviet aircraft constructor Putilov (one of my personal friends)—why did you do time in a concentration camp?

Marshal Rokossovski, now Marshal and Minister of Defence of Poland—will you tell the world who knocked out your teeth—where, how, and why?

Stalin's new men were soon rewarded by the Kremlin. Yezhov entered the Politbureau, mounted the Presidium of the Government,

became a member of the Central Committee and the Orgbureau, People's Commissar of the Interior and Commissar-General of State Security, and proud wearer of the Order of Lenin. Malenkov became a candidate for membership of the Central Committee of the Party, of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., and head of other bodies. Vishinsky, too, was remembered; the Order of Lenin sat proudly on his breast.

The degree of madness may be judged from the reaction of Comrade X. About the 20th of November, a secret meeting of five men was held near Moscow. Demokratov was the youngest of us. Comrade X was giving instructions and, to Demokratov's astonishment, suddenly, in measured tones, he proposed the assassination of Yezhov, in whom he saw a monster, dangerous beyond our imagination. He argued his case, and formally proposed that Demokratov should be charged with the task of liquidating Yezhov on either the eve of or during the VIIIth Extraordinary Congress of the Soviets; he produced detailed plans worked out during the preceding month.

'Your opinion, Comrade Demokratov?' he asked. Demokratov stared at the table-top, for he knew what this task would mean for him. At last, he said: 'I think the question is a double one: first, am I prepared to execute a decision of our controlling centre, and secondly, do I consider the act will benefit the peoples of the U.S.S.R. My answer to the first question is that I am prepared to kill Yezhov. To the second my answer is: no, I do not think it will benefit the peoples of the U.S.S.R.'

Finally, it was decided not to proceed. Comrade X withdrew his proposal, but wished Demokratov's readiness to obey to go on record.

Two days later Riz arrived in Moscow. He was categorical: we would have been wrong, as he put it, to 'stain the ideals of our revolutionary struggle with such foul blood'.

On November 25th, the VIIIth Extraordinary Congress of the Soviets met, to pass the new Constitution. It spoke of freedoms, but confirmed a one-party tyranny. On December 5th, Stalin declared that not only did the new Constitution formally grant freedoms, but it also concerned itself with guaranteeing them. Characteristically, this was confirmed five days later, on December 10th, by a new widespread wave of arrests, including those of many members of the Congress which had just passed the Constitution.

The logic of this can be traced from Blanqui, the early nineteenth-century French socialist, who taught that only an intellectually awakened élite could steer humanity to the desired socialist

goal. This was a favourite theory of Lenin's. 'I declare,' he wrote,¹ 'that no revolutionary movement can be stable without a firmly established body of leaders who maintain priority; hence the Party, as vanguard of the Revolution, and leading force of the Soviet community, must principally consist of professional revolutionaries; the more we narrow down the composition of the Party organisation, that is, its leading core, the better guarantee for its success.'

This also appealed to Stalin; his one-party oligarchy consequently became identified with the State itself. The 'collective obligations of citizens to their homeland' came to mean their 'collective obligations to the Party'. 'The Party', narrowed down, was the *Central Committee*, and the Central Committee, narrowed down still further, was the *Politbureau*. So—if you do not agree with the *Politbureau*, you do not agree with your country. And if you do not agree with your country, you harm it, you are a traitor, an enemy. In one of his speeches, Vishinsky declaimed that all those who opposed Stalin 'should be shot down like mad dogs'.

On January 23rd the Third Moscow Trial began. The chief accused were: Piatakov, Party member since 1910, member of the Central Committee, First Deputy People's Commissar of Heavy Industry and second Party theoretician after Bukharin, a man of whom Lenin thought highly; Radek, Party member since 1903, another theoretician, Member of the Central Committee, and on the staff of *Pravda*; Sokolnikov, Party member since 1905, Member of the Central Committee; Serebriakov; Lifshitz; Muralov; Drobnis; Boguslavsky; Kniazev; Rataichik; Norkin; Shestov; Stroilov; Turok; Grashe; Pushin—all veterans who were either founders of the Revolution, or had come into the Party during the great revolutionary days. Formally the trial was a continuation of the preceding trial.

Behind the façade of their 'trial' and condemnation we knew that no less than 20,000 others, throughout the country, had suddenly lost their liberty—and would in due course lose their lives. But in addition to the drive against 'Trotskyist' anti-Stalinism, the trial was the prelude to other charges and liquidations of even greater significance.

It is necessary to say something of the bearing of the principal Trotskyists at the trial. I saw a report by their prison superintendents. Pushin, Kniazev and Lifshitz were offered their lives in return for betraying their fellows—they betrayed. Rataichik, a weak and timorous character, was required to expose Piatakov in

¹ *Collected Works*, Russian edition, Vol. VIII, p. 88.

return for mercy. He did so. The most contemptible of all was Turok. The NKVD had almost nothing against him, yet, so Comrade X told us, he grovelled at the preliminary enquiry. His only difficulty in giving the evidence they wanted of him was that he knew nothing of what Piatakov and Muralov actually had done. But this problem was soon solved.

'You know nothing? Have you confidence in the officers of State Security?'

'Of course I have.'

'You trust us? Well, all we want of you is to support what we say—is that not logical?'

Drobnis, too, proved a weakling. He was of working-class origin, he had been a revolutionary since the age of fifteen, had spent six years in Tsarist prisons, and had been sentenced to death three times by the Tsarists. He was now terrorised and paid mechanical loyalty to the men who were destroying him. He stood confessed before the court (which he identified as his own Party and class) 'as a traitor and criminal'.

Muralov was of different mettle, and to the end he remained a fanatical Trotskyist. He told the court that if it was a crime to be a Trotskyist, then he was a criminal, and in his final speech he shot a last bolt at Stalin. It was, he said, in man's nature to make mistakes, only a fool could lay claim to infallibility. His scornful words did not of course find their way into the carefully edited 'Report of Court Proceedings' which stands in English on the shelves of Western libraries.¹

Piatakov, to his honour, betrayed nobody. 'Citizen judges,' he said, 'I have waived my right to a speech in my defence because the Prosecution is right in its statement of the facts, and in its estimation of my crime. But I cannot reconcile myself to one assertion made by the State Prosecutor, namely, that even now I am a Trotskyite. Yes, I was a Trotskyite for many years; but my only motive for the statements I have made at this trial, was the desire, even now, even when it is too late, to get rid of my loathsome Trotskyite past.'

Nobody acquainted with Piatakov's work could seriously doubt that he was speaking the truth. Nevertheless, convinced anti-Trotskyist though he was, the Military Tribunal shot him. It was sufficient now that a man had at one time disagreed with the régime along Trotsky's lines.

¹ The reference is to *Report of court proceedings in the case of the anti-Soviet Trotskyite centre*; People's Commissariat of Justice of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, 1937. This claims to be the full text.

But all this was unimportant compared with what Karl Radek did. He and Nikolai Bukharin had been close friends for years. The basis of their friendship was a lofty one. Each delighted in the other's agility of mind and incredibly wide reading. Bukharin should have been the last man whom Radek would betray.

Radek's appearance in the dock created a sensation. Who did not know the witty, cynical articles which had so often filled the columns of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*? He was brilliant both as writer and speaker; he was even popular. In everyday life he had a frank, friendly word for every man, but in serious affairs he played a double game.

With which Trotskyists did he maintain contact? asked Vishinsky—and out came the list they wanted: Mrachkovsky, Smirnov, Dreitzer, Gayevsky, Piatakov, Preobrazhensky, Smilga, Serebriakov . . . but of course, never a mention of such real Trotskyists as, for instance, Andreyev—or Malenkov.

Not that Malenkov has ever been a very precise ideologist. In 1917, as a young Cossack near Orenburg, he found himself—more by chance than choice—on the side of 'the Reds'. He did not become acquainted with the theories of Bolshevism till 1920, when he was sent on a two-months' study course, hardly a thorough grounding, before he joined the Party. However, in 1924 he became secretary of the Party branch of the Moscow Technical Institute, then one of Trotsky's bastions. In those days Malenkov signed many an anti-Stalin, Trotskyist resolution: not by deep conviction, but rather by sheer inertia. Of all the living members of the Soviet Olympus, Andreyev and he had been the most outstanding supporters of Trotsky. This Radek knew quite well, yet never a hint did he give at the trial. He obeyed his masters well.

'What concrete facts can you mention concerning your connections with the Right-deviation group?' Radek was asked, early in his cross-examination—after he had 'frankly' revealed his dealings with Trotskyism, and the receipt of letters from Trotsky.

'I had connections with Bukharin,' he replied. 'Tomskey I saw only in 1933, when he spoke in very sharp terms about the internal situation in the Party.'

'What conversations did you have with Bukharin?' Vishinsky demanded.

The court listened with horror. Radek said: 'If you mean conversations about terrorism, I can enumerate them exactly. The first conversation took place in June, 1934 . . . At that time he and I conversed as members of two centres in contact with each other. I asked him: "You have taken the path of terrorism?" He said: "Yes . . ."'

It was all elaborately prepared beforehand. Karl Radek had been provided with a comfortable room in NKVD headquarters, well-lit, warm, furnished with a typewriter and ample paper. Well fed, wanting nothing, he had typed out fluent and exhaustive denunciations and inventions, some of which were not even used in court. It was he who fabricated the 'evidence' of the so-called 'Tukhachevsky conspiracy'—the alleged military conspiracy against the State, led by Marshal Tukhachevsky and other high-ranking officers. He also provided the culminating 'evidence' on which Bukharin was arrested, tried and shot.

Many are under the illusion that Bukharin's arrest followed immediately upon the condemnation of Zinoviev and Kameniev. Other rumours suggested that he committed suicide.

In fact, Bukharin was arrested during the night of 16th October, 1936, when Radek had completed his treacherous statement. Bukharin was summoned to a sitting of the Central Commission of Party Control, when it was proposed to effect his expulsion from the Party and removal from all posts, including that of chief editor of *Izvestia*. But the chauffeur, acting under secret orders, drove him at high speed into the courtyard of the Lubyanka prison.

Thus, completely unprepared, the papers on his desk still in disorder as he had hastily left them, not even permitted to ring up his house, with no change of clothes, the greatest living theoretician and philosopher of Marxism-Leninism, sometime member of the Politbureau and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, found himself in solitary confinement.

Two floors above him, in luxurious surroundings, sat Yezhov. Bulanov, formerly Yagoda's secretary, said that, as soon as he learned that Bukharin was in the prison cellars, Yezhov telephoned Stalin and said laconically: 'The spy Bukharin is now in a safe place.'

We had known of Radek's treachery at least a fortnight before this, and we tried to save Bukharin. A precise and unambiguous offer was made to him: 'After what Radek has now said against you *in writing*, Yezhov and Vishinsky will soon have you arrested in preparation for yet another political trial. Therefore we suggest that you should "vanish" without delay. Here is how we propose to effect this . . .'

No political conditions were attached to the offer; it was made out of humanity to a man who was considered a great and worthy son of his country, and because it would be a mortal blow if the NKVD transformed Bukharin on trial into another Kameniev, Zinoviev or Radek. The very conception of opposition would have been discredited throughout the U.S.S.R.

Bukharin expressed his warm gratitude for the offer but refused it, not because he doubted its sincerity, but because up to the last he was an idealist, a man exclusively of principles and theories. Far from caring about personal danger, he continued his labours on his philosophical work which was to run to many volumes and was to be entitled *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*.

To Comrade X's spokesman he replied: 'I am completely uninterested in Radek's declarations. Today, when the fate of mankind is being decided, when there is a witches' sabbath in our country and the nation is in the grip of terror, one should think not of one's personal fate, but of the fate of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., of the future of all mankind, of the sufferings of simple folk, of our own historical blunders and illusions. Of what importance for mankind can the arrest or shooting of Bukharin be? What do I care about the denunciations of Radek or Kameniev? It is the peoples of the U.S.S.R., not Bukharin, who have to be saved.'

Giving his characteristic little foxy cackle, he stroked his beard, and added: 'Please don't be worried, even Stalin and Yezhov will never go quite so far.'

What did he mean? That no one in the Kremlin would dare to lay hands on the man whom Lenin had called the most valuable and most talented theoretician of the Party? That they would shrink from attacking the man who had the vast, tacit support of the peasant masses and the non-Russian peoples of the U.S.S.R.? That the social democrats of the West would take up the cudgels on his behalf?

This was the last contact between Soviet men in opposition and the cleverest opposition leader of the U.S.S.R. since Trotsky's exile.

He asked how we proposed to hide him from Yezhov's ubiquitous agents, and with whose assistance. He was worried lest we had appealed for foreign money or other assistance. Of course we had done nothing of the sort; the U.S.S.R. was vast enough to conceal a dozen Bukharins.

It was not for more than a year that Bukharin was brought into court. During these fourteen months many others fell victim to the terror. Among them was that great man, 'Sergo' Ordzhonikidze, who was harried to death.

THE FATEFUL YEAR OF 1937

1937 WAS a great milestone in my life. In May I successfully defended my thesis on the automatic multicomponental aerodynamic balance for a wind tunnel. I passed out of the Zhukovsky Academy with the rank of military engineer mechanic (M.Sc.) and was finally marked down for a career of scientific research. In the grip of one of the sciences of the future I lived in a state of real exaltation, but this mood alternated with crippling hopelessness. However brilliantly I progressed as an aerodynamicist I could never stifle my love for my country and could not rest long without concerning myself with the problem of its misery or well-being. Politics were forced on me. A fortnight after Sergo's death I was goaded into one more anti-Stalin 'crime'.

One day I was discussing the scales I had invented with two fellow engineers, both of them Party members. Since this was Moscow the conversation turned inevitably to politics and they asked me what I thought of Sergo's death and of the rumours that were spreading. I tried to wriggle out of answering, but they insisted. So I said plainly that I no more believed the official version than I believed the charges laid against Bukharin. That was all.

My fellow engineers denounced me to the Political Department of the Academy. After all, they only did their duty as Party members in reporting a fellow member who questioned the wisdom of the line laid down by the Central Committee.

Enquiry followed. It was in the hands of a young fellow named Kotik, who was an outside instructor of the Political Department. He was new to his job.

Kotik: 'Well, well, Comrade Tokaev, tongue's run away with you again, eh?'

Tokaev: 'Well, well, Comrade Kotik, tongue's run away with me again.'

Kotik: 'I want to know why. Who gave you the right? After all, you're a man who understands what's what.'

Tokaev: 'I believe I do know what's what.'

Kotik: 'Have you any class sense?'

Tokaev: 'I have, Comrade Kotik. I have passed all my political examinations with distinction, so I must be quite literate politically.'

Kotik: 'Have you any sense of revolutionary vigilance?'

Tokaev: 'I have that too, Comrade Kotik.'

Kotik: 'Let's get that down in writing . . . *Has class sense . . . Has class-consciousness . . . Politically literate . . . Also politically vigilant . . .* Then, Comrade Tokaev, how on earth could you babble such nonsense about not accepting the official explanation of Comrade Ordzhonikidze's death? It's shocking!'

Tokaev: 'I always believe in official explanations.'

Kotik: 'Let's put that down . . . *Believes in official explanations! Does not question the government communiqué . . .*'

Tokaev: 'Fool!'

Kotik: 'Who is a fool?'

Tokaev: 'Certainly one of us, Comrade Kotik. Probably the one who has no class sense . . .'

Kotik: '???'

Tokaev: 'In short, my tongue has run away with me again.'

Kotik: 'So that's what you're at . . . Oh come, no, no, don't call yourself a fool because your tongue runs away with you. You have class-consciousness—I've put that down. Clearly, you also have self-criticism. So altogether, in future, Comrade, see . . .'

Tokaev: 'Yes, sir, I will, I will see to the raising of my class Marxist-Leninist revolutionary dialectical consciousness . . .'

Kotik: 'But that's fine, fine, I'll put that down. *As self-criticism Comrade Tokaev undertakes to raise the level . . . (and so on . . .)* That exhausts the question of the causes of Comrade Ordzhonikidze's death. Now let's get on to the second question, about Bukharin. Do you admit he is a terrorist, vermin, scum?'

Tokaev: 'Certainly not, Comrade Kotik.'

Kotik: 'Good gracious, whatever do you mean?'

Tokaev: 'As far as I know, Comrade Bukharin is still a candidate for membership of the Central Committee of the Party, so I cannot permit even you to call him terrorist, vermin or scum. Do you realise who you are speaking about? A candidate for membership of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks)—a man working side by side with Comrade Stalin!'

Kotik: 'I don't quite understand. Who is a candidate for membership of the Central Committee?'

Tokaev: 'BUKHARIN.'

Kotik: 'BUKHARIN?'

Tokaev: 'Yes, Bukharin!'

Kotik: 'But I didn't know that was still the case. Here, let me just get it down, then everything will be in order . . .'

A nice example of a fool busy at 'political work'. Ignoramuses like that were appointed by Malenkov, all over the country, to straighten our minds for us. Replacing men of the old guard they were the ones whom Yezhov called 'a huge new stratum in our Party'—now the top stratum in Stalin's empire.

Of course, all commissars were not Kotiks. On the contrary. In the Political Departments, highly skilled men were still at the head and naturally Kotik's report did not in the least satisfy them. So my case was now taken up by Cadres-Captain Lavrentiev of the political service, the editor of our Air Force journal *Forward and Higher* (*Vperiod i Vyshe*). He interrogated me again and submitted a new report. All was now set for a Party branch assembly, and another drubbing, if not worse.

Luck was on my side. Almost all the men of my year—nearly the whole membership of my Party branch—were away, in various corners of the Soviet empire, working on their own final diploma plans (each of us was required to produce a complete set of designs, together with all constructional calculations). In such a case as mine it was obligatory to have a full assembly. Consequently the hearing had to be postponed.

Tense days followed. I trod gingerly, on the edge of a gulf into which at any moment I might disappear for ever. I was prepared for the worst. My large officer's service valise was ready packed with changes of linen and toilet requisites, against a sudden arrest. At the same time I was cheered by our Party branch secretary, Artem Ivanovich Mikoyan, brother of the Politbureau Mikoyan, and constructor of the famous MiG-15. He told me that my case had been passed to him for urgent consideration at a session of the Party bureau, but a quorum could not be obtained. My heart sank for a moment, but Mikoyan smiled and said: 'You needn't worry, everything will be all right . . .' More he would not say, but I trusted him. We were fast friends. We disagreed politically, but we liked and respected each other, with the affection and respect of brothers. He is a shining example of a loyal Stalinist communist and Party member who has remained a man in every sense. Moreover, he has never harboured ideas of imperialism or hegemony, and in critical phases of Soviet life he helped to protect many a man from the arbitrary savagery of the fanatics.

In 1951 a New York Russian Newspaper bitterly attacked me for my expressed esteem for a 'communist tyrant and enslaver', like Artem Mikoyan. It is an ugly feature of the Western world to

brand everything Soviet as evil. This is to adopt the fanatical formula of Lenin and Stalin: 'who is not with us is against us', and I reject the division of the community into two diametrically opposed camps. There are always many men who stand intermediately, holding some of the convictions and views of both camps or of neither.

Working on inside information from his brother, Artem Mikoyan contrived to delay my examination by a minority Bureau, and thus saved me. And then something most unexpected happened. For tactical reasons the Stalinists were compelled to relax their oppression a little. At the Plenum of the Central Committee which began on March 8th, 1937, the agenda included discussion of the internal conditions of the country. The terror and rumours of further wholesale arrests had created too widespread a sense of insecurity. The first elections under the new Constitution to the Supreme Soviet were due shortly—direct elections in which the electors had the theoretical right to put up their own candidates. What if the Kremlin suffered a defeat, however small, and the figures leaked out? Mental automatism was not yet universal, too many people were still inclined to ask awkward questions. It is no exaggeration to say that in many Party branches most of the members had at some time come into conflict with the Party line, and these were for the most part the livelier people as compared with the inactive mediocrities whose records were unspotted; they were the men whose vigorous support the régime needed to deal with the emergency. And suddenly it was discovered that increased oppression was not the way to secure this.

Consequently, after defining the electoral duties of Party Branch offices, Zhdanov proposed:

(1) immediate curtailment of investigations, such as that of my 'crime' and further proceedings only in cases where definite crimes had unquestionably been committed;

(2) a nation-wide revision of all previous Party sanctions and the cancellation of 'tails' in the records of men who had not been guilty of specific crimes;

(3) introduction of the secret ballot in elections of Party officers.

The immediate effect was tremendous. I recall that at one meeting alone of our Party Bureau the cases of 45 men were re-examined and 80 Party sanctions were cancelled! There were no speeches. The Secretary read out a name and the marks against it and proposed the cancellation of this or that by a show of hands. Up went all hands, even those of the fanatics—for this lavish clemency was dictated by the Central Committee.

My own record was dismal: expulsion from the Comsomol; expulsion from my Trade Union; Trade Union reprimand; expulsion from Leningrad; the charge of Trotskyism; the charge of Right-wing deviation and 'civilian democratism'; one expulsion from the Party; a second expulsion from the Party; a stern Party reprimand; a second stern Party reprimand; a third expulsion from the Party which ended in a stern Party reprimand with final warning. Now I stood a chance of starting Party life anew. Unfortunately there was one fly in the ointment—a loophole for the fanatics; they were not instructed to cancel *all* sanctions. Consequently I still found myself with a dossier of one 'tail', the worst of all, the one usually imposed after lesser sanctions: I still had a record of 'reprimand with final warning'. Nevertheless, I did gain immensely, for the new charge against me was dropped from the record altogether.

For the moment I was safe. I could not think it was for long. Despite the apparent relaxation, the situation of our underground movement was tragic. Our ranks had been decimated, the survivors driven deep underground and forced for the most part to suspend their activities.

My old friend Belinsky, the acknowledged leader and thinker of our group in Moscow at this time, summed up the position as follows:

(1) One of the greatest mistakes of all the oppositionist groups in the thirties had been their failure to recognise the ability of Stalin and his group to control the country.

(2) Too many of us had taken a sweepingly negative view of the régime: they considered that reactionaries like Stalin and Yezhov were incapable of achieving any industrial or cultural advance and believed them to be fools—time has shown what a fatal error that was!

(3) Not one oppositionist group had proved capable of preparing in good time, as an alternative to the Party's general line, a programme sufficiently revolutionary to capture the sympathy of the masses or to hinder the progress of mental automatism.

(4) In early 1937, the peoples of the U.S.S.R. were less prepared for democratic life than they had been on the eve of the October Revolution; they no longer had experience of decentralisation nor of political liberty (which did exist, after all, under Tsarism); they had forgotten the meaning of personal initiative in production, they had no contact whatsoever with the outside world, they knew nothing of the liberty of the individual or the group.

Neither Comrade X nor Riz fully agreed with these pronounce-

ments. Most of us refused to swallow the bitter pills Belinsky offered us; we declared he was a 'pessimist' who had 'lost his faith in popular forces' and 'surrendered in the face of the difficulties'. But time proved that it was neither pessimism nor surrender to recognise the fact that the ordinary Soviet man no longer even wanted democracy as we liked to think he did.

I was astonished, ten years later, to find émigré Russian periodicals in the West babbling to the effect that the peoples of the U.S.S.R., above all the 'Russian nation', waited impatiently for the advent of classical democracy, and ascribing all our ills to Stalin. How glad I should be if this were true!

However, Belinsky's cold douche of objectivity did not put paid to our deliberations and eventually Riz contributed some additional conclusions and suggestions (I am sure he would endorse them today):

(1) Radical changes in the U.S.S.R. were essential, hence there could be no withdrawal from our revolutionary democratic struggle.

(2) We must never imagine that democracy could be given us from outside: our only course was to fight for it year after year, decade after decade, generation after generation.

(3) It was true that we had neither democratic traditions nor a democratically minded population; but it was also true that the February Revolution represented at least a flicker of democracy and, like other revolutionary flickers in the history of Russia and the U.S.S.R., it pointed to a latent belief in democracy among the common people: upon this we must build our work.

(4) There could be no expectation that the reactionary régime would fall for years to come; but on the other hand the State-monopolistic ownership and control of the means of production had reached its apogee.¹ Logically, there must therefore be a decrease in centralisation, visible, if not to us, at least to our sons. Thus, in the long historical perspective, our prospects were not hopeless and it was therefore our duty to work hard at building up what would eventually take the place of Stalinism.

And in fact a bold attempt after the Second World War to create an underground opposition party, the PDPR,² though quickly suppressed, proved clearly that there were still men ready to fight for the cause. (Neither Comrade X nor Riz took part in this organisation and therefore came unscathed through the subsequent arrests.)

But to come back to 1937 and to my own position.

¹ This idea in fact developed some months later, in spring 1938.

² *Podpolnaya Demokraticheskaya Partia Rossii*: 'The Underground Democratic Party of Russia'.

I had come a long way from the tractor driver of 1925. I was now engrossed in the problems of subsonic and supersonic speeds. The work which had made me All-Union prizeman on the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Comsomol was on the visualisation of Air-flows in Wind Tunnels, the detailed elaboration of a method by which the naked eye can see the slip-stream round a body.

I was becoming a scientist proper. At the same time, since I was no longer able to devote my leisure to practical underground work, I began to extend my political education. The Libraries of the Central House of the Red Army and of Moscow State University often saw me bent over the histories of past civilisations, revolutions, dictatorships, democracies, empires and free states. On Sundays and holidays I found relaxation in browsing in second-hand bookshops in search of anything that might throw light on how people once had lived. Many of my friends thought me slightly mad. The booksellers of Kirov Street smiled when they saw me and sometimes suggested that I must be pilfering the housekeeping money.

However, I had no need to starve to pay for my books. Yuriev, a well-known aerodynamicist, my teacher and friend who had assisted me in my work on the wind tunnel balance, gave me many a job as supply engineer or laboratory technician; this gave me practical experience and was always well-paid work. I now lectured twice a week at evening classes on machine drawing and mathematics, and this also was well paid. All the time, as a pupil of the Academy, I had had free board and lodging as well as from 400 to 500 roubles a month, and when I received my diploma, I was directed to continue research at the Academy. My wife—of whom more later—was then a student at the Voroshilov Military Chemical Academy, and so her living was ensured. Thus we were really much better off than the average, and I was able to collect a large and interesting library of my own.

So began my life as an engineer scientist in my own right and in a position which surpassed my wildest dreams. I was the only one out of a hundred to be chosen that year to stay on at the Aerodynamics Laboratory of the Zhukovsky Academy for research.

There cannot have been a prouder man in the whole of the U.S.S.R. Three years before, I had written an article about my beloved Zhukovsky Academy in the Caucasian languages magazine *Aerygon Bolshivik*; now I was part of its research organisation, a specialist in the Aerodynamics Laboratory. Fortune seemed to be smiling on me.

Even my smaller prizes were not to be scorned—from the head of my faculty, an engraved logarithmic slide-rule; from the head of the Academy a free holiday in the Military Rest Centre at Feodosia, in the Crimea, with all expenses paid; and from the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force a fine motor-cycle! (Motor-cars were rare in the U.S.S.R. in those days; a motor-cycle was therefore a splendid present.)

Imagine me then, on top of the world, aged twenty-seven, in a fine new uniform, off to my beloved Crimea. Both Comrade X and Riz knew I was going, but neither burdened me with a political task. Feodosia is a typical Black Sea township, strung along a narrow strip of coast, yet beautiful by reason of its wonderful setting. But to me Feodosia had a special importance as the home of Aivazovsky, a famous Russian painter of battle-scenes. He had left his remarkable collection of pictures to his native town. It dated from 1880 and in 1937 contained more than a hundred pictures—now there are over 2,000. I had long wanted to see it, and I suspect that Divisional General Pomerantzev, who was then head of the Academy in Todorsky's place, sent me to Feodosia for this reason—a gentle touch indeed, for he knew of my interest in the arts.

There is another reason why I could never forget the Aivazovsky Museum. On June 11th, 1937, I had gone to the gallery as soon as it was opened, and was lost in contemplation of a canvas, when a young engineer friend of mine came up behind me and whispered in my ear that I must come outside, as he had terrible news for me.

I went outside, no little disturbed. Were the NKVD on my tracks after all? Or, a shiver passed over me, had Comrade X or Riz been arrested? But the news outdid even my apprehensions in its monstrosity. The Moscow radio had just broadcast a lengthy communication from the Office of the Public Prosecutor. I cannot do better than give it in full:

'The case of M. I. Tukhachevsky, I. E. Yakir, I. P. Uborevich, A. I. Kork, R. P. Eidemann, B. M. Feldman, V. M. Primakov and V. K. Putna, arrested at various dates by the organs of the NKVD, has been brought to the close of investigation and passed to the court. The above-mentioned arrested persons are accused of infringing their military duty (their oath), of treason to their country, of treason to the peoples of the U.S.S.R., of treason to the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army . . .

'The evidence of the preliminary investigation has established the participation of the accused, and also of Y. B. Gamarnik who ended his life by suicide, in anti-State connections with military circles of a foreign state pursuing a policy of hostility to the U.S.S.R. Being

in the service of the military intelligence of that state, the accused systematically supplied military circles of that state with espionage information on the condition of the Red Army, carried on sabotage aimed at weakening the strength of the Red Army, endeavoured to prepare the defeat of the Red Army in the event of a military attack on the U.S.S.R. and aimed at bringing about the re-establishment in the U.S.S.R. of the régime of the landlords and capitalists.

'All the accused have admitted their guilt on all counts. Examination of this case will take place today, June 11th, 1937, *in camera* before a special bench . . .'

The next day, June 12th, the findings of the Supreme Court were published. The special bench found all the accused guilty of infringement of their military duty (their oath), of treason to the Red Army, treason to the fatherland, and sentenced all the accused to deprivation of military rank and the supreme measure of capital punishment, death by shooting.

Two days later I asked a stevedore at the Feodosia Port Mills what he thought of the shooting of Tukhachevsky and the others.

'What? Nothing,' he replied. 'All that puzzles me is how Comrade Stalin managed to scrape through. Or Comrade Voroshilov. After all, you know, the spies were working with them.'

'What exactly do you mean?' I asked.

'What do I mean? Nothing,' he said again, 'only I put it to myself like this: if there were spies working with me, say, under me, and suddenly they were arrested, what would happen to me?'

We both knew the answer very well—he too would be arrested, and the least he would get would be twenty-five years in a concentration camp. After all, it was the Kremlin who had created these men. Gamarnik and Tukhachevsky were not *my* chosen assistants, but Voroshilov's!

The comb-through began at once. One by one we military men in the Rest House of Feodosia were hauled before the Rest House Commissar, a major by rank.

'Come in, come in, Comrade Tokaev,' he said. 'Now, what's your impression of the just sentence pronounced by the Soviet people?'

'That is a leading question,' I said, and smiled. 'If you qualify the sentence as just and as the sentence of the people, only an idiot would be likely to tell you it wasn't.'

He rose to this at once. 'Oh, so you mean to suggest that the sentence was not just?'

'Oh no, Major Commissar, not at all. I merely wished to point out that by framing your question in that way you are pre-

determining an affirmative answer. Surely, Comrade Major, that is a bad way to conduct political work, don't you think?'

'I require your views regarding the shooting of the Tukhachevsky group, Comrade Tokaev,' he said testily. 'You are not a new recruit to the Red Army and you surely understand the essence of political work.'

'I understand it perfectly well, Comrade Major, but I came to Feodosia not for political reasons but to rest. Is that clear? R-e-s-t, rest! I want to bathe, get some sun, go for walks in new places, not to give you my views on current affairs.'

'Comrade Tokaev'—he grew angry, which was just what I wanted—'I am the commissar here, not you. I do not want your empty talk. I have instructions from my superior officer, and I have a right to enquire about your views.'

'A right, have you?' I said. 'Go to hell, Comrade Commissar! I have my own superior officers.'

Now, this commissar was no fool, but it was clear that he was new to the commissar's uniform. He lacked the formal military accent. No doubt it was wrong—also injudicious—of me to play on the poor fellow's weaknesses, but in spite of my metropolitan haughtiness, I was raw, my heart was bleeding for brave and brilliant officers, now dead—and for the Red Army deprived of so many outstanding leaders.

'Comrade Tokaev,' the commissar continued, 'I have one little question which I must ask you, however much it annoys you—have you ever had dealings with a spy named Tukhachevsky?'

'I have never met the spy Tukhachevsky,' I replied firmly, 'but I have certainly had business with the Deputy People's Commissar of Defence, Candidate to the Central Committee of the Party, and Marshal of the U.S.S.R. Tukhachevsky—business of an official nature concerning inventions of mine.'

To my surprise, the commissar broke into raucous laughter. A real peasant, I said to myself. Then, blowing his nose loudly into a remarkably grubby handkerchief, he shook his head and cried: 'Hang it all, facts are facts, aren't they . . . ? Yesterday Deputy People's Commissar, today spy . . . It does make you laugh, doesn't it?'

'I see nothing to laugh at. I see a tragedy, Comrade Commissar,' I said.

'Maybe, maybe,' he said, 'but what am I going to put down on paper? That's the question.'

'Put down what I say,' I said.

'Good Lord, but won't you get into trouble for that, Comrade Tokaev?'

'No matter whether I do or don't, your business is to put down what I say . . . I never had occasion to meet a spy named Gamarnik, but I have had occasion to meet a Gamarnik, Member of the Central Committee of the Party, Politbureau candidate, Chief of the Supreme Political administration of the Red Army and Army Commissar of the First Rank. That Gamarnik often visited our Academy. Yes, put it all down.'

'Did you ever have to meet enemy of the people Osepyan?' he asked.

It can be imagined what such a question meant to me. The man who had done so much for me, a man distinguished for his rare moderation and humanity, called an *enemy of the people, a spy*. I knew as well as Stalin did that nothing more monstrous could be imagined. The commissar clearly saw the outrage he caused me and he ceased his questions there and then.

A day or two later he and I sat together by the sea and talked. I told him something of my connection with Osepyan, not my political dealings, but human contacts, as man to man. He listened with bated breath. He had never been to Moscow, and his notion of political work in the Red Army was infantile. Partly for this reason, he was still a human being. I enlightened him on life in Moscow, on Gamarnik, on Radek. We became friends, and soon after this I managed to get him transferred to Moscow—but not as an oppositionist, merely as a man.

In these days, I repeat, I was inactive politically. The commissar and I were bound, not by political association, but by profound human ties, and by reason of the disaster which we each understood to have befallen our unhappy country. For we were both convinced that there was truth in the assertion made in court during the Radek trial that a certain foreign power—namely, Nazi Germany—was planning to attack the U.S.S.R. This stark fact made it unthinkable that Tukhachevsky, of all men, was an agent of the Nazis. Tukhachevsky and those shot with him *were* the Red Army. Soldiers from the days of the revolution, they had built the Red Army in the post-revolution period. Could we ever forget Tukhachevsky's report to the XVIIth Congress of the Party on the mechanisation of the forces? It was in recognition of this vast organisational work that Tukhachevsky, the brilliant strategist, was in 1935 elevated to the rank of Marshal. Voroshilov was the top man, officially the grand old man of the Red Army, but nobody for a moment imagined that Voroshilov was more than a sentimental figurehead. Everybody knew him as the *loshadiny marshal*—the equine marshal—a man with no more intelligence than a horse.

It was no secret that others had transformed the Red Army from a loosely-knit, pre-1914 type revolutionary army into a close-knit, mammoth modern military machine. Now, in their frenzy against all dissident opinion, the madmen of the Kremlin had decapitated that army. It would take ten years at least to replace those who had been shot. Would the war, already visible in dark clouds on the horizon, wait so long? We doubted it, and, sitting on the shores of the lovely Southern sea, we grieved over the fate spelled out for our country in that ominous year of 1937.

THE APOGEE OF INFAMY

AFTER LEAVING the Feodosia Officers' Rest House, I spent the remaining month of my holiday among the Cossacks in my home country, North Ossetia.

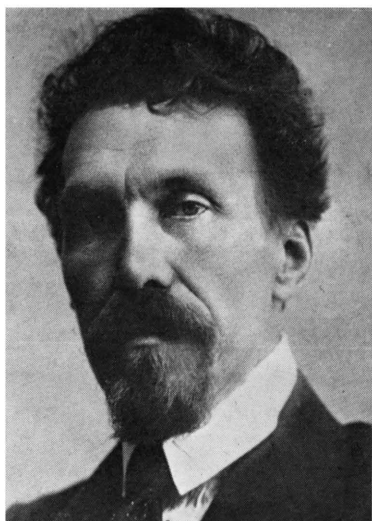
I began by calling on an old friend, now Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the North Ossetian Autonomous SSR, a former miner, a human, uncomplicated person. He was startled at seeing me: he had thought that I was dead. The shooting of Tukhachevsky and the others had been followed by a mad destruction of the senior officers in the services. Gagloyev had assumed me to be a victim, but had not of course made any enquiries, since to do so would have cast suspicion on himself.

Many wild rumours had reached him: tales of uprisings in Moscow; the whole Zhukovsky Air Academy was under arrest and half of us shot; even that Stalin and Voroshilov were dead. Top-level men in the North Ossetian Republic were all carefully watching their step. They were staggered by what had happened. Spies, spies, spies—had the Revolution been made from beginning to end only by spies?

I visited the scenes of my childhood and youth. The once smiling land was sombre with poverty and sunk in inertia; it was a lesson to a man from Moscow to observe the unbelievable degree of political apathy.

I had seen poverty in Moscow, but not this grim kind. I asked a girl what she would buy if she had enough money, and she said: a cake of good soap. I shared a meal: scraps of sour black bread, half-empty bowls of watery soup. To this low level of life and hence low productivity had Stalin's forced collectivisation brought some of the most competent, diligent, hard-working farmers in the world.

When I got back to Moscow, Army circles were in an uproar. The fanatics called for ever more vigilance. Denunciation followed denunciation, and the NKVD arrested and destroyed. The press, hysterical too, tried to distract its readers' attention with stories of the flight over the North Pole of Gromov and Yumashev, Chkalov and Belyakov, Kokkinaki and Vodopianov. There were mass



Rykov



Tomsy



Molotov and Bukharin

arrests in the Commissariat of Defence, and in the Red Army Central Political Administration Office. In every single military unit disciples of the executed Red Army men were found. It is no exaggeration to say that the flower of the Soviet armed forces was now mown down.

Yezhov worked like one possessed and on June 17th he was awarded the Order of Lenin. *Yezhovshchina* was formally recognised, and the real foundation of Stalin's 'higher democracy' was defined with outrageous frankness on July 27th by Kalinin: 'I should also like to emphasise the great achievement by the *narkomvnutdeltzy*¹ on the construction of the Moscow-Volga canal, where it was necessary to employ a huge mass of men under repression. . . . ' To the question whether it could be true that the U.S.S.R. was built on slave labour, here is the answer, from the highest source!

Despite the triumphant course of my work, which had put me on the first rung of a great ladder, the situation was indeed black when, shortly after my return, a startling event occurred in my political life.

I was summoned by Divisional Commissar Smolensky, the political head of the Academy. He told me shortly that the Political Department had decided to appoint me secretary of the united Party Branch of the Chairs and Laboratories of Applied Aerodynamics, the Dynamics of Flight, Hydrodynamics and Hydraulics, and of Aircraft Construction and Design. The appointment was astounding. Surely I was known as a man of heretical tendencies?

Smolensky 'off the record' explained that 'there was no other man eligible by rank who was not under secret surveillance at that moment'. It was gratifying to learn that for once I was not under surveillance, but that was still not an adequate explanation. Smolensky however refused to discuss the matter further and told me coldly that the decision was final.

I had to be formally elected to the position by a Party assembly. After an impassioned speech in my favour by the Instructor of the Political Department, a unanimous vote made me the Secretary of the largest Party branch on the scientific side in the whole Zhukovsky Academy. This meant that all Party activity among these high-level scientists was entrusted to me to control: my combined branch included some of the U.S.S.R.'s most distinguished personalities in the world of learning—professors, doctors of science, candidates of science, engineers, as well as technologists, laboratory assistants and precision mechanics.

¹ *Narkomvnutdeltzy*: men of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs, i.e. NKVD men.

It was a significant turning-point in my life. From that point in 1937 till my forced exile abroad, except for short intervals, formally I belonged to the leading corps of the Soviet Communist Party. The potential outcast of yesterday was now in a position to get direct information on all backroom Party doings. Hitherto my dossier had been studied by others, now it was in my own hands as well as the dossiers of other people. I need not dwell on the possibilities this opened up for me and for my fellow-oppositionists. The appointment was in fact a secret victory for our cause, though I never knew if it was Comrade X's work, or the belated fruit of Osepyan's efforts. Perhaps it was even through Smolensky's own initiative.

Arrest followed arrest. The People's Commissar of Education was arrested, so were the People's Commissar of the Defence Industry and the People's Commissar of Agriculture; Alksnis, Belov and Blücher, three of the military judges who had 'tried' Tukhachevsky, were arrested. Marshal Budyonny's wife disappeared. Hodzhayev, Chairman of the Government of Tadzhikistan, Ikramov, Chubar, Postyshev, Kashirin, Ippo, Levandaovski, Orlov, Petin, Selyakin, Tkachov, Fedko, Khalepsky, Shtern . . . Malenkov smashed to pieces the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs; Vishinsky, the Administration of Agitation and Propaganda.

At last, at a secret Party assembly, it was officially announced that military tribunals had been set up in *all* military districts, for the trials of 'spies, vermin, traitors'. I now learned that circles close to Comrade X had been almost completely wiped out. Most of them had been arrested in connection with the 'Right-wing deviation'. In fact, Comrade X's group were not Right-wing deviationists, but a *military Right-wing opposition*, which was not at all the same thing.

Soon after, I learned that there was to be a fourth great public trial before a military tribunal. The chief accused were to be Bukharin, Rykov, Krestinsky . . . At the same time 'bourgeois-nationalist' leaders were being arrested in all the non-Russian regions. Belorussia was decapitated, as were the Ukraine, the North Caucasus, Transcaucasia and Turkestan. It was a reign of super-terror.

I was now summoned by the Political Administration of the Air Force to a conference of Air-Force Party secretaries. Here I talked to a man whose name I cannot mention. I was told that the Party Central Committee had passed a resolution 'to proceed to the physical extermination of all Right-wing deviationists'. The Buryto leaders, Bukharin and Rykov, were to be the actors in the principal

judicial farce in Moscow (Tomsky, of course, was already dead); the remaining thousands (under the 1st December, 1934, law) would be tried by lesser courts of three working *in camera*. This was to affect every corner of the country. In less than a year the Right-wing deviation was to be rooted out as in the Middle Ages the Albigenes were destroyed.

I left the conference shaken, for now I doubted no longer: I had been made Secretary because I could be relied on to save others, at whatever risk. How well I remember my walk back to the Academy. I could not get Bukharin out of my mind. I did not share his views; but in a way I admired him, and months earlier when we had learned of Radek's denunciation of him I had been one of those who had tried to save him. His bearing at the trial would be of supreme importance. He would be smeared in every possible way, charged with outrageous crimes, and called a spy and a fascist. If he could not stand up to this and prove the charges false, it would be a tragedy: through Bukharin all the other moderate opposition movements would be tarnished. Would our millions of peasants stand by him? If they failed him, the country's prospects would be darkened. A whole generation must go by before another of Bukharin's stature would win the support—or sympathy—of the masses of the peasantry. Now, you peasants, I thought, now is the hour for you to show your mettle. The world watches you and waits with bated breath.

But the peasantry did not stir, nor, it seems, did the world hold its breath.

Here it is necessary to outline the history of the *pravyy uklon* (right-wing deviation). It is a dangerous illusion to think of the Bolshevik party as 'monolithic'. It began as a fraction of another party and continued thereafter to produce further fractions and splits. Every year continuously after the revolution some group opposed the central leadership. But while Lenin was alive, the struggle with his opponents was invariably waged in terms of ideas. Now, under Stalin, it was waged in terms of physical suppression, and ideas were allowed no part in it. Indeed, Bukharin's first rebellion (1927-8) was caused by Stalin's avoidance of the battle of ideas in the dispute with Trotsky. The Buryto group was formed because Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky were the only members of the Politbureau to vote against Trotsky's banishment in 1928. Stalin, Molotov and Kirov considered this not a difference of opinion, but a 'conspiracy' against the majority.

The assumption that disagreement meant counter-revolutionary conspiracy served to conceal real differences of opinion, which

Stalin and his henchmen did not wish to discuss. Stalin and Bukharin differed profoundly over many aspects of socialism. Bukharin wanted to go slowly with the peasants, and delay the ending of the NEP; he was against subordinating the interests of the working-class movements in other countries to those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; he also held that the revolution need not take place everywhere by armed uprising and force. Stalin wanted to make the U.S.S.R. a powerful base for his sort of world revolution; Bukharin thought that every country should develop on its own lines. Stalin believed his socialism should be the pattern for all countries; Bukharin did not. Stalin wanted more and more centralisation of power in the U.S.S.R. 'in the name of world revolution'; but Bukharin's views were diametrically opposed to his on this point. Indeed, the polarisation of these two men was such that as early as 1928 Stalin invented the term *pravy uklon* (right-wing deviation) to refer to his opponents.

Stalin, as Secretary-General of the Party, controlling all public speech, had already made it extremely difficult for Buryto to put forward their programme; nevertheless they succeeded in publishing its main points: (1) Not to end NEP but to continue it for at least ten years; (2) To limit the compulsory sale of farm produce to the State and allow free market prices; (3) To curtail the State monopoly of trade; (4) While pursuing industrialisation, to remember that the Revolution was made for the ordinary man, and that, therefore, far more energy must be given to light industry—socialism is made by happy, well-fed men, not starving beggars; (5) To halt the compulsory collectivisation of agriculture and the destruction of *kulaks*.

Stalin at once called a special Plenum of the Central Committee and the Control Commission (April, 1928) and ordered the immediate destruction of all copies of the Buryto programme which had been circulated. Against considerable support for Bukharin, Stalin carried the day, because by then he already controlled the principal forces of repression. He wound up the debate in his cynical style, by stating that Bukharin (the Party theoretician singled out for distinction by Lenin) 'does not see how classes have altered', 'does not understand the changes which have come about', 'is out of touch with reality', and 'has turned aside from the Leninist path'! Pursuing his anti-internationalist line—based on the traditions of the Tsars—Stalin forced through a resolution that in future *all* matters coming up for decision by the Comintern must first be discussed and approved by the Party Politbureau. As Chairman of the Comintern, Bukharin had held to the principle that all

its member Parties had equal rights. One of the main purposes of the April Plenum was to condemn this view and assert the dominant rôle of the Soviet Party.

Now this duel had entered its last grim phase: Bukharin was to be publicly tried—for holding different views on humanity, on public affairs, on the rights of peoples, on the rights of communist parties abroad? No. That to Stalin was unthinkable; he had not argued about ideas for at least ten years. The trial must establish that Bukharin and his like were *criminals*.

The trial began on March 2nd, 1938, and the full indictment, an elaborate document, was published. The accused, according to the NKVD, under instructions from alien spy systems, organised a secret terrorist and espionage group known as the 'right-wing Trotskyist bloc', whose aim was the overthrow of socialism in favour of capitalism, and the dismemberment of the U.S.S.R. by wresting from it the Ukraine, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Belorussia and the Far East!

To any thinking man this combination of aims was a patent absurdity.

Apparently, this remarkable 'bloc' also embraced the underground anti-Soviet organisations of the Trotskyists, the Zinovievists, the right-wing, the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries, and the bourgeois nationalists of the Ukraine, Belorussia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidzhan, Turkmenia, Kirghizia and the Far East.

This astonishing alignment was alleged to be proved by trials which had already taken place in the various non-Russian republics and by the trial of Tukhachevsky and the other military leaders, who were supposed to head the military section of the bloc.

Further, Trotsky, supposed originally to have inspired the formation of the 'bloc', had long since been linked with the Nazi secret service and—the British intelligence service! On Trotsky's orders, Krestinsky, former Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, had been in the German service since 1921. Rozenholz, former People's Commissar of Foreign Trade, joined the British service in 1926 and the German service in 1932. Rakovsky, one of the big figures of the Revolution, had served the British intelligence service since 1924, and the Japanese since 1934. And so on. All this Bukharin and Rykov had connived at, since they too were foreign agents.

The defendants were Bukharin, Rykov, Yagoda, Krestinsky, Rakovsky, Rozenholz, Ivanov, Chernov, Grinko, Zelensky, Besonov, Ikramov, Hodzhayev, Sharangovich, Zubariov, Bulanov, Levin, Pletniov, Kazakov, Maksimov-Dikovskiy, and Kriuchkov.

This trial has immense historical significance, but I must limit myself here to a brief outline of certain points which were—and are—part of my life.

First, what did the average citizen think of the indictment: the crimes alleged against such a man as Bukharin; the presence of Bukharin and Yagoda together in the dock; the combination in one group of men of such varied views? My answer obviously cannot be complete. I was not a journalist and in Moscow I had little opportunity to test the reactions of people outside the metropolis.

On the other hand, I was able to observe the reactions of a considerable body of top-level aeronautical scientists and engineers of my united Party branch, especially when the Political Department told me to call a general meeting to pass a unanimous resolution approving the indictment.

Here is a major difference between a Soviet trial and one in a democratic country: in the U.S.S.R. it was not contempt of court to discuss the indictment before the trial had taken place or to express an opinion on its fitness; on the contrary, it would have been a serious infringement of the code not to have done so.

It may be imagined how little I wanted to face my learned and not unenlightened colleagues and denounce Bukharin as a spy and murderer. Fortunately I had the best of excuses to escape this predicament, for I already had a card of entry to the trial itself. This card made my attendance at the trial virtually obligatory.¹

The first man I asked to replace me at the meeting was my deputy, Kapersky, no great brain, but a thinking man. I remember our conversation as if it were yesterday. Kapersky changed colour.

‘Grigori Alexandrovich,’ he said, ‘I meant to report yesterday . . . I . . . I am not well . . . I have a terrible head and feel absolutely lousy . . . I really ought to be in bed. . . .’

‘Since you are at work, Yury Pavlovich,’ I replied, ‘you are surely well enough.’

Mine was an official Party request; I could not take personal reasons as an excuse. But he gave me his word of honour as a communist that he was unfit, and then added: ‘Please get me out of this duty . . . I beg you, Grigori Alexandrovich.’

In fact, we were good friends, and for a moment I threw off the official mask and asked him point-blank if he was afraid to speak against Bukharin: after all, we both knew that nearly all our members were on Bukharin’s side. He nodded. Yes, he was afraid—not of what others might think, but that he would be unable to

¹ To have a ticket conferred upon one was the equivalent of a royal command to be present: to fail to appear would be most peculiar.

sustain the falsehood, and by stammering and fumbling for words reveal his true position. I had only one course: to order him to go straight to bed and stay there till the need to prove illness was past.

I then summoned Oleg Zemsky, member of the Party Bureau of the branch, a second-rank military engineer, a grand fellow, and very clever. We were on intimate terms, and I asked him without pretence at formality: 'Oleg, could you do the leading speech against Bukharin?'

'What on earth, Grisha!' he replied. 'Have you gone mad? How can you ask me to do such a thing? I'm not going to support Vishinsky's whorish fabrications. Ask me if I'll take part in an armed attempt to rescue Bukharin, and the answer's yes.'

Finally I called on Smurov, a wild, fanatical character and also a model Stalinist.

The following day *Forward and Higher* reported that 'in the sub-section commanded by Comrade Tokaev a mass meeting was held of professors, scientists, the engineering and technological staff and workers. Comrade Smurov made a passionate bolshevik speech, calling for death by shooting for the band of fascist hounds. A resolution, passed unanimously, called on the organs of State Security to purge the Soviet land of the loathsome fascists'.

Such meetings, of course, were held simultaneously throughout the country a few days before the trial opened. The Presidium of the Party had sent out the instructions and hundreds of thousands of unanimous resolutions were passed spontaneously.

Moscow lay under deep snow; the temperature was well below zero. Not everybody in Moscow buys a newspaper, as in London. Just as in some British provincial cities, newspapers are displayed in special windows and that day there were larger crowds in front of them than usual.

But when I emerged from the underground at the *Okhotny Riad* station and made my way to the Hall of Columns of the Trade Union Building, where the trial was to be held, it was noticeable that there was no gathering of sight-seers. Anybody observed waiting by the entrance was likely to be asked his reasons. Could he say he was sympathetic to Bukharin? That would be an offence for which a small man could easily lose his life. Therefore—keep well away. . . .

Punctually at midday on March 2nd, 1938, the judges entered the court: Ulrich, chairman, Army Advocate; Matulevich, Corps Advocate; Yevliev, Divisional Advocate; and Zyrianov, Brigade Advocate. Prosecutor: Vishinsky. I would have liked to catch

Bukharin's eye, but he was too far away. A mutual acquaintance, however, shot me a meaningful glance from a distance.

Ulrich told the court which Government-employed lawyers would defend the accused, and this brought frank smiles to many people's faces. Bukharin turned and surveyed the court-room for a moment. His glance dwelt longest, so it seemed, on Comrade X, as if he was thinking: 'You were right, Comrade X, when you offered me a chance to "vanish" rather than let these savages lay hands on me.'

The reading of the indictment ended at last, and Ulrich called on each of the accused to state whether he admitted guilt. Krestinsky did not reply, so Ulrich repeated the question. Then Krestinsky answered: 'No, I do not admit myself guilty.'

This dissentient voice upset Vishinsky; he tapped the papers before him and glanced sharply at Ulrich. Ulrich whispered to his colleagues. Vishinsky repeated the question, Krestinsky again denied guilt. What a triumph it would have been, had all the accused been of like stature.

Vishinsky now examined Bessonov who testified to Krestinsky's guilty liaison with Trotsky; Krestinsky called Bessonov a liar, an agent of the accusers. Krestinsky was an old professional revolutionary, Party member since 1904, first Secretary-General of the Party (before Stalin), an idealist who would not lie. Grinko, Rozenholz—the counter-accusations multiplied, but still Krestinsky denied guilt.

It was not till the following evening that the duel ended. The old revolutionary, already an ill man, had been worked on throughout the previous night: injections, psychological pressure and, finally, the torture of being made to sit facing directly into concentrated light of thousands of candle-power. Without a scratch on his body, Krestinsky was reduced to a state of absolute political apathy. He knew he could not save his life; not one of the accused could hope to do that; but Krestinsky had at least wanted to save his political integrity. Now he no longer cared even about that.

Vishinsky: 'Do you now confirm your preliminary confessions?'

Krestinsky: 'I do confirm my previous confessions.'

Vishinsky: 'Then what was the meaning of your declaration yesterday that you did not admit your guilt? Was that not a Trotskyist act of provocation?'

Krestinsky: 'Yesterday, under the influence of a sharp momentary feeling of false shame, caused by the circumstances of the dock and the terrible impression made on me by the reading of the indictment, aggravated by my poor state of health, I was unable to

say that I was guilty. And instead of saying *Yes, I am guilty*, I almost mechanically answered *No, I am not guilty.*'

Vishinsky: 'Mechanically?'

Krestinsky: 'Before world public opinion I had not the strength to say that I had long carried on a Trotskyist struggle against the Soviet régime. I beg the court to register my declaration that in every detail, completely, I admit my guilt in all the most serious charges made against me personally and admit myself completely responsible for treachery to my mother country and the treason committed by me . . .'

This was, I think, the most dramatic moment in the whole trial, for it laid bare, as nothing else did, the methods of justice, administered by Stalin, Yezhov and Vishinsky. Not only had we read what Krestinsky said the day before—we had seen and heard the man, and we knew who and what he was. The man who spoke on March 2nd had the voice and bearing of Krestinsky; the man who spoke on March 3rd spoke in tones of extreme despair. Even if we had not known how prisoners were processed for the puppet shows of Stalin's justice, we should have guessed from the change in Krestinsky. The court-room was electrified. Krestinsky's new words sounded a knell. A middle-aged woman began to sob. She tried to conceal her tears and, pressing a handkerchief to her face, she left the court-room. She did not reach the street at liberty—NKVD men bore her off for questioning.

We were analysing the scene two months later, discussing the measures to take against these forces of evil, and I remember the intense dismay on Comrade X's face when he put into words what we had all felt: that 'one could not imagine anything more horrible than Krestinsky's state of mind and body in those moments'. In one night the scientific technique of Stalin's men had destroyed the human being in Krestinsky without impairing his body.

Krestinsky had been Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs; the man who conducted the 'investigation' of his guilt and that of others in the Commissariat was Malenkov.

It is in the light of this that we have to read the ugly story of the cross-examination of Bukharin. He had been the principal ideologist of an opposition movement with wide ramifications. He was the magnetic centre of all moderate groups. Vishinsky could never have proved him guilty of criminal acts to the satisfaction of a normal court of justice. But against a prosecution conducted by suggestion and false deduction under pressure, in an atmosphere of genuine terror, it was almost useless for Bukharin to struggle against the tide.

He was first cross-examined on the fourth day of the trial (March 5th, 1938). He looked strange, not in the least his normal self, his face grey, drawn, and uncharacteristically apathetic: normally Bukharin's features were illuminated with the glow of his thoughts. I do not pretend to know what he had been through; in any case, he had seen Krestinsky transformed in a night from a man into a dummy.

Yet Bukharin tried—in vain—to answer questions as one reasonable man to another. From the outset he made no bones about it: he had been the initiator of a programme which had stirred the whole country. He said, yes, if a struggle against the existing form of state and social structure was a crime, he admitted his guilt, and to this extent confirmed what he had said under interrogation.

'I define my guilt in the following points,' he said. 'First, the right-wing deviation, of which I was the principal leader, had a different political line, a line directed against the extension of socialist construction as set in motion, and opposed to attacks on the capitalist elements of town and village; secondly, our political policy was based on a different speed of development in various fields and was directed against forced industrialisation, against the liquidation of the *kulak*¹ class; thirdly, it was against the one-Party system, which means that it was against Stalin; and fourthly, my guilt consists in having belonged to the so-called "counter-revolutionary right-wing Trotskyist bloc", though I wish to qualify that this definition is subject to certain conditions, and I use it merely by force of the standardised terminology, established by this court; I am also guilty of being the principal leader of that bloc.'

Vishinsky: 'What aims did that counter-revolutionary organisation pursue?'

Bukharin: 'This counter-revolutionary organisation, if it really was counter-revolutionary, to attempt a short definition . . .'

Vishinsky: 'Yes, for the present, only in brief. But your organisation, your criminal bloc, was counter-revolutionary, without any "if's".'

Bukharin: 'In essence, though, so to speak, perhaps it did not sufficiently realise the position or dot its i's as is customary to do in court, the organisation pursued, generally speaking, aims which one might interpret in the last resort as a restoration of capitalist

¹ *Kulak*, properly, a clenched fist. From early times used to describe a miser and/or a dealer in grain. Prior to the revolution the word came to be applied to enterprising peasant farmers who by marked agility, as well as by good husbandry grew rich. It was left for the revolution in its decay to apply the term abusively to any enterprising individualist farmer.—*Translator*.

relationships . . . But that, so to speak, is only a conditional definition of the aim, it was not the actual aim . . .’

Tortuously, Bukharin was striving to be precise before the court. After all, he was a communist and hence could agree that a return to the New Economic Policy and a slackening of the pressure on the *kulaks* involved a measure of revived capitalism, and was ‘a return to capitalist relationships’—‘in the last resort’ meaning not that this was the final aim of the movement, but the ultimate interpretation which could be put on the proposal by a communist who did not agree with the right-wing deviation. Vishinsky drove the point home: ‘One can understand nothing whatsoever from your formulation. “Although”, “so to speak”, “perhaps”, “generally speaking”, “one might interpret”, “conditional definition” . . . What does all that amount to? It does not interest us. State plainly: did you make your aim the overthrow of the Soviet Government, the Soviet régime?’

True to Stalinist method, he rejected out of hand ideological argument, even on an ideological matter.

Bukharin did not retreat from his careful definitions. ‘Subject to certain qualifications, it could be said that the overthrow of the Soviet régime was regarded as a means for the realisation of our aim, although, perhaps . . .’

Vishinsky lost patience. ‘Again these clever little words. Again “although”, “perhaps”. We are not interested in that. Your counter-revolutionary organisation made its aim the overthrow of the Soviet régime, and I ask you: by what means?’

Bukharin: ‘By taking advantage of the situation of the moment as a whole; although, perhaps, great importance was attached to exploiting the difficulties which the Soviet régime is meeting, among them, perhaps, difficulties which might arise in connection with war, the prospect of this being considered prognostically, but given certain favourable conditions war, of course, could not be an important means to us.’

Vishinsky: ‘Considered prognostically, there was prospect of war—with whose assistance? Through whom did you propose to unleash war?’

Again Bukharin refused the provocation and argued back carefully: ‘Wars are not unleashed, they arise; consequently we considered in general terms that a war might begin, were there the necessary conditions for it, on the part of alien states. The existence of a right-wing or left-wing Trotskyist bloc was not indispensable for a war to arise.’

The cross-examination was full of passages like this. Vishinsky

persistently tried to force his crude over-simplifications while Bukharin piled on more and more qualifications of whatever he said. The lengths to which Vishinsky's cheap insinuations could go were revealed when, in the course of cross-examining Yagoda, he turned to Bukharin and asked him what had been Gorky's attitude towards Trotsky.

'One of sharp hostility,' said Bukharin.

Vishinsky: 'I wonder if you know what the attitude of Trotsky to Gorky was?'

Bukharin: 'The same, one of sharp hostility.'

Now came a sly suggestion by which Bukharin might be made to admit that he was well-informed on what the Trotskyists thought.

Vishinsky: 'Accused Bukharin, do you know that this attitude of hostility towards Gorky was to be found not only in Trotsky, but also the Trotskyists?'

The childish nature of the trap is a good illustration of the standard of Vishinsky's arguments, and Bukharin's acid reply nettled him.

Bukharin: 'But of course, as Trotsky and the Trotskyists are one and the same thing.'

Persistently Vishinsky asked Bukharin whether in 1918, he had supported the plan to assassinate the leading personalities of Party and Government;—again and again Bukharin answered firmly: No, till at last his patience was exhausted, and he cried: 'If it pleases you to put such questions, of course you can go on inventing them, but neither in general nor in particular am I a terrorist. I am a counter-revolutionary in ideas, using the word counter-revolutionary in the special meaning which this court is accepting.'

To 'prove' his guilt in this respect, the Prosecutor produced men who hated Bukharin (the Social Revolutionaries Karelin, Kamkov and Proshian and left-wing communists Yakovlev, Osinsky and Mantzev), who gave the statements required of them. But still Bukharin coldly answered: 'No.'

Vishinsky: 'You never even thought of murdering Lenin?'

Bukharin: 'No, I never even thought of it. At first there was not even mention of his arrest, but only of detaining him a day, so as to get a resolution through in his absence.'

Vishinsky: 'You did not count on the arrest of Comrade Stalin in 1918?'

Bukharin: 'After all, there was talk about setting up a new government altogether, consisting of the "left communists".'

Vishinsky: 'I ask you whether there was a plan to arrest Comrade Stalin in 1918.'

Bukharin: 'At that time we gave little heed to Stalin altogether.'

But of course the arrest, or detaining, of Lenin would have affected Stalin and Sverdlov too.'

Vishinsky: 'But about the assassination of Comrades Lenin, Stalin and Sverdlov—you intended this?'

Bukharin: 'On no account, and in no way.'

Vishinsky's rage was childish. There were moments when he was at a loss for words. Then the smear went on.

Vishinsky: 'Before we go on, I would like to ask you, accused Bukharin, whether you have lived in Austria?'

Bukharin: 'I have.'

Vishinsky: 'For long?'

Bukharin: 'In 1912 and 1913.'

Vishinsky: 'Were you not in touch with the Austrian police?'

Bukharin: 'I was not.'

Vishinsky: 'Have you lived in America?'

Bukharin: 'Yes, I have. Seven months.'

Vishinsky: 'In America were you not connected with the police?'

Bukharin: 'Absolutely not.'

Vishinsky: 'From America you returned to Russia through Japan, where you spent a week. During that week were you not recruited for the Japanese intelligence service?'

Bukharin: 'If it pleases you to put such questions, then we are not in a court of law . . . I do not know how to describe it . . .'

Vishinsky (agitated and angry): 'I have the right under the criminal Code of Procedure to put such questions. I have not gone outside the framework of the Code. I . . . I . . . I . . . You are bound to answer my questions. Did you have no relations with the police?'

Bukharin: 'Absolutely none.'

Vishinsky: 'Then why did you so easily adhere to a bloc which was engaged in espionage?'

Bukharin: 'Regarding espionage activity, I know absolutely nothing, and never had anything to do with such activity.'

Vishinsky: 'Then what did the bloc do?'

Bukharin: 'You have already had two statements about espionage, from Sharangovich and Ivanov, that is, two *agents provocateurs*, but the statements of *agents provocateurs* do not interest me.'

Vishinsky: 'Your fine friend Rykov considers that the national-fascist organisation which was led by Sharangovich and belonged to the bloc, dealt in espionage. Rykov, your fine friend, said this.'

Bukharin: 'None the less, I knew nothing of any espionage activity.'

Vishinsky: 'I would like to explain to the accused Bukharin why I question him about the Austrian police.'

Bukharin: 'My only "relations" with the Austrian police took the form that they put me in prison as a dangerous man.'

Vishinsky: 'Accused Sharangovich, you were a Polish spy, weren't you, although you were imprisoned in a Polish prison?'

Sharangovich: 'I was, although in prison.'

Bukharin: 'I spent time in a Swedish prison, and was twice in a Russian prison. I was in a German prison, and an Austrian prison, but all the same I never became a spy or an *agent provocateur*.'

Vishinsky: 'Accused Bukharin, you spent time in various prisons, but that did not prevent you from approving the connection of Sharangovich, a member of the Right-wing Trotskyist Centre, with the Polish intelligence service. You understand that, of course?'

Bukharin: 'I understand it, but I also deny it. I deny having approved any connection of the *agent provocateur* Sharangovich with the Polish secret police.'

Vishinsky's fury was indescribable. Bukharin, on the other hand, had found new life. Many hearts beat fast and proudly. Nothing like this had been witnessed throughout the succession of trials. In these circumstances, Bukharin displayed supreme courage. He demonstrated that, however small and mean most of the accused might prove to be, the really great man could still be great even on the threshold of death. At this point—the court suddenly rose.

What happened in the basement of the Lubianka between the evening of the fifth of March and the morning of the seventh, when the trial resumed, I do not know. That they left Bukharin alone one cannot for a moment believe. On the other hand, they may have hesitated to torture him, lest he shout the truth to the world in court.

The last stage began. Bukharin gave evidence of the birth in 1929–30 of the idea of overthrowing Stalin's rule. Yes, he declared, the idea was to introduce a liberal one-party régime, with an economic policy much like Lenin's New Economic Policy. He had certainly considered supporting Yenukidze and Tukhachevsky. Yes, he had organised peasant uprisings, particularly in the North Caucasus, where Slepkov, Eismont, Pivovarov, Beloborodov, Petrovsky, Zaitsev and others had acted in the name of Buryto. But all this was evidence of a political struggle, and Vishinsky required evidence of criminal acts. Suddenly he halted Bukharin and headed the evidence off in a new direction.

Vishinsky: 'Accused Bukharin, I should like to ask you about your connections with the White Guardists and German fascists.'¹

¹ German fascists—the general Soviet term for the Nazis.—*Translator*.

Bukharin: 'I have no knowledge of such connections. At least, my memory is unable to recall a single example.'

At this biting irony, Vishinsky flushed scarlet, but he quickly asked if Bukharin knew of the connections of Karakhan (a former Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs) with the Nazis. This too Bukharin rejected, adding: 'I never knew Karakhan as a German agent.'

But Vishinsky was hot on another smear trail.

Vishinsky: 'Did you approve Karakhan's talks with the Germans?'

Bukharin: 'I have always been a supporter of talks, as such, as a method of settling problems . . .'

Vishinsky (thoroughly worked up): 'Before your time people knew it was useful to have talks, but I am interested in a concrete question—did you or did you not approve of Karakhan's talks with the Germans?'

Bukharin: 'In general, putting aside the practical details, since I did not disavow them, obviously in a general sense I approved of them.'

Vishinsky: 'You accept responsibility for Karakhan's talks with the Germans?'

Bukharin: 'As a leader of the right-wing deviation, I certainly bear moral-political responsibility for what the organisation did. Of course I do.'

Vishinsky: 'That means that you equally bear responsibility for talk at the same time about the detaching not only of the Ukraine, but also of Belorussia?'

Bukharin: 'I do not see the problem in that way. Not at all. There was talk not of detaching the Ukraine or Belorussia, not of giving them to the Germans, but of national independence. In any case, in 1930, when we discussed these matters, there could have been no talk of giving the Ukraine or Belorussia to the Hitlerite fascists, for the simple reason that Hitler was not yet in power and German fascism as yet did not exist in a state form.'

Vishinsky mopped his brow, crushed as he had never been before, nor has been since. For some moments he was unable even to look at Bukharin. Clearly, he could not think where to go from that point. Then suddenly, with a characteristic jerk of the head, he pointed at Bukharin and mumbled something very quickly. Nobody understood. Certainly not Bukharin. He shrugged his shoulders and smiled slightly. Then the machine resumed its course 'normally'.

Vishinsky: 'You were connected with Radek?'

Bukharin: 'I do not wish to discuss *agents provocateurs*.'

Vishinsky (in great agitation): 'Accused Bukharin, do you admit yourself guilty of espionage or not?'

Bukharin (calmly): 'No, I do not.'

Vishinsky: 'In Belorussia you had a group of men in touch with you, conspirators, headed by Golodyed, Cherviakov and Sharangovich? Is that right, Sharangovich?'

Sharangovich: 'Quite correct.'

Vishinsky: 'That means they were spies, just as . . .'

Sharangovich: 'Just as I was myself.'

Vishinsky: 'Accused Bukharin, do you hear?'

Bukharin: 'I do. I have already said that Sharangovich is an agent provocateur.'

Vishinsky: 'Accused Bukharin, do you confirm the evidence of Hodzhayev that you right-wingers looked to Germany and Japan?'

Bukharin: 'All I ever said to Hodzhayev was that we should have to have dealings with various countries, with various foreign states, and that we could not have dealings with only one grouping, but must have dealings also with the others.'

Vishinsky: 'Was there talk of England?'

Bukharin: 'There was.'

Vishinsky: 'Was there talk of Japan?'

Bukharin: 'There was. I said that we should have to have dealings with all countries.'

Vishinsky: 'Was there talk of Germany?'

Bukharin: 'There was.'

Vishinsky: 'So Hodzhayev was right when he said that you talked to him about connections with English intelligence men?'

Bukharin: 'No, I do not confirm that. That did not take place.'

Vishinsky (finally losing his temper): 'Accused Bukharin, once again I ask you—on the basis of what is here said against you, will you confess to the Soviet court by which intelligence service you were recruited, the English, the German or the Japanese?'

Bukharin: 'By none. I have nothing whatsoever to do with espionage.'

Vishinsky was defeated. At last he knew that it had been a cardinal error ever to bring Bukharin into open court. He should have been shot out of hand, like Yenukidze and Sheboldayev. The examination now passed to other matters, and only at the end did *Vishinsky* again, though unavailingly, return to his accusation of a treasonable connection with Germany.

It must be remembered that in 1938 an attack on the U.S.S.R. by Germany backed by other powers could already be regarded as possible.

Vishinsky: 'I have a new question to put to the accused Bukharin. Tell me, Bukharin, do you refuse to admit that you were the initiator of the idea of opening the front to the Germans if they attacked the U.S.S.R.?'

Bukharin: 'I refuse to admit what did not take place. I did have some talk with Rykov and Tomsy about the subject, but that still does not mean that I was the initiator. When a doctor talks about his patient's complaint, that does not mean that the doctor is ill himself.'

Vishinsky (turning to the Bench): 'I consider the question of opening the front to the enemy cleared up. I have no more questions for the accused Bukharin.'

The verdict was a foregone conclusion. It was only in his attempts to get Bukharin to condemn himself that Vishinsky had failed. Many of Bukharin's revealing replies could of course be expunged from the record. The U.S.S.R. would know only the official version. Few foreigners in court understood Russian well enough to get a clear impression of what was really said.

But in any case, the mood of the Western world, a mood of what it considered a new realism and objectivity, was to condone the Tsars of the Kremlin; despite Vishinsky's own plain and infuriated admission, I find that most Western 'experts' on Soviet matters still assert that Bukharin, like the lesser men at the Moscow trials, confessed his guilt.

'The examination of the accused is complete,' said Vishinsky in the second part of his final speech, 'but Bukharin does not confess his guilt. As the devil flees from innocence, so Bukharin flees from admission of his guilt. Bukharin has here denied his guilt.'

Pletnirov was condemned to twenty-five years' imprisonment, Rakovsky to twenty years' imprisonment, Bessonov to fifteen years' imprisonment. The remaining eighteen men were condemned to death by shooting. (All sentences included 'confiscation of all property'.)

THE APOGEE OF FRUSTRATION

UP TO 1937, sentence of death had almost invariably been carried out by shooting, and by professional executioners and officers of the NKVD, a method which worked well enough so long as the number of victims was limited. It was easy to conceive of one hundred 'enemies of the people', even a thousand, or perhaps ten thousand, but when figures soared beyond that number the minds of the executioners were naturally assailed by doubt.

By 1938 they had become unreliable. In Rostov two men preferred to shoot themselves rather than their friends and relations who, up to yesterday, had been regarded as honourable men. In another Southern town certain 'bourgeois nationalists' escaped from prison shortly before execution was due to take place. In Leningrad the same phenomenon occurred.

There was another difficulty. Honest men on the point of death for their beliefs and opinions often loudly defied their executioners and in an atmosphere of widespread doubt, their words were likely to produce a deep effect and to be passed on. Stalin's men appreciated the danger, and in the main centres, Yezhov introduced mechanised instruments of execution.

The official statement told the world that Bukharin and those condemned with him were shot on the night of March 11th, 1938. In fact they passed through one of the new slaughter machines.

Walking in front of the executioners, the victim entered a corridor about six feet high and two feet wide. It might lead to torture: this would be the case where information was needed from a man or woman, destined in any case for destruction. It might lead to immediate death; death provided by one of two methods: shooting by automatic weapons built into the walls, released at a certain point where the victim inevitably trod on a spring section of the floor, or by levers, released in the same way, which crushed him. In either case, after death, the machinery tipped the body into a furnace ready to cremate it without delay.

My underground group was informed that Bukharin, Yagoda and Rykov were destroyed by this last method. They were despatched down their last corridor of life by Yezhov, Ulrich (as chairman of

the court which had condemned them), and Vishinsky. The story which still circulates abroad that Bukharin is alive is without foundation.

The need for such devices tells its own story, but Beria's explanation of the crisis to Gardinashvili, one of my close contacts, is interesting. The conversation took place just before Beria was appointed Head of the police. Gardinashvili asked Beria if Stalin was blind to the dismay caused by so many executions—was he unaware that the reign of terror had gone so far that it was defeating itself; men in high positions were wondering whether Nazi agents had not penetrated the NKVD, using their position to discredit our country.

Beria's realistic reply was that Stalin was well aware of this but was faced with a technical difficulty: the speedy restoration of 'normality' in a centrally controlled State of the size of the U.S.S.R. was an immense task. It was beyond the power of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs to have his fingers on everything in every corner of the country.

In addition, there was the real danger of war, and the Government therefore had to be very cautious about relaxations.

Still, there was no doubt that even taking account of these factors the scale of the terror was immense: Beria estimated that between 30 and 35 million persons had been repressed in one way or another in the past ten years. Assuming that this vast number consisted largely of Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, Trotskyists, Bukharinists, Zinovievists, White Guards and German spies, then the only conclusion to be drawn was that the Soviet régime was very shaky indeed. It was this argument which finally persuaded Stalin to trust Beria rather than Yezhov.

On March 10th, 1939, the Party held the XVIIIth Congress, at which Stalin 'historically' recorded that 'in the U.S.S.R., in the main, socialism has been introduced'. This, he explained, was primarily due to the successful completion of the fourth task laid down by the preceding Congress (of 1934), namely, the 'complete liquidation of all opposition'—whether of the Left or the Right.

Apart from executions and imprisonments, the composition of the Party had in fact been radically changed; its élite everywhere was replaced by younger men trained by Stalin and Molotov, Yezhov and Malenkov. Devoid of ideals, the new men were crass, fanatical and self-seeking bullies, modelled, one might think, on the Tsarist provincial police bosses satirised half a century earlier in Satykov-Shchedrin's *Ugrium-Burcheyev*.

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In 1936 the Party pyramid consisted of:

- 11 Central Committees (one in each of the various Republics)
- 34 Party Committees attached to ministries
- 110 Regional Party Committees
- 30 County (*okrug*) Party Committees
- 550 Town Party Committees
- 3,815 rank-and-file Party Committees

By March, 1939, all these had been dissolved and re-formed, largely with new personnel, into:

- 1 Central Committee
- 15 Central Committees of the various Republics
- 5 Regional Party Committees
- 100 Provincial (*oblast*) Party Committees
- 30 County Party Committees
- 215 General Town Party Committees
- 340 Town Ward Party Committees
- 3,485 Village Regional Party Committees
- 113,070 rank-and-file Party Committees

The process of staffing these organisations with new human material was still in progress in 1938. What this meant can best be illustrated by the Party Central Committee. In 1934 the XVIIth Congress had elected 71 members. In 1939 only twelve of these were still alive, and of these only seven (i.e. one in ten!) still took an active part in public life. *Twenty-nine* had been shot, another had committed suicide. At least *sixteen* had been sentenced to hard labour, or were under arrest, or had died in prison.

Stalin's new order had a similar effect on the Zhukovsky Academy, the majority of whose members had once been supporters of Bukharin's policy of moderation in building socialism. Now it consisted almost entirely of a bureaucratic intelligentsia of obscurantist outlook. Those few of us who had managed to scrape through with our lives had aged prematurely, and drew our almost greying heads into our shoulders. If *nichevo* had once been a frequent word in colloquial use, we now had another one: *ne mogu bol'she*,¹ used when oppression had reached the limits of mental resistance. It was remarkable that we did not all give way to this. I was saved by my studies, and of course by the great happiness of my marriage. In

¹ *Nichevo*, literally 'nothing' used in the sense of *no matter, I don't care nor need you*. *Ne mogu bol'she*: I cannot (bear it) any longer.—Translator.

1937 I had married a fellow North Caucasian, Aza Zauerbekovna Bayev. As I have said, Aza was also a student of engineering. In 1938 our daughter was born. My wife shared my ideals and my heart-aches, and that meant a great deal in those early days of counter-revolution.

We younger men of the Zhukovsky Academy should have represented the younger generation of workers and peasants. In fact we had been turned into members of the reactionary élite; some of us were proud to climb the ladder of fanatical Stalinism, others, deeply ashamed.

Thus by the end of the second Five-Year Plan the first generation of the workers' and peasants' intelligentsia was divided at heart. Some of us already perceived that the day was not far off when the working-class of the U.S.S.R. would be more cut off from the new ruling class than that of almost any other country. Yet we could do nothing; we were passengers in an express-train, powerless to call a halt and condemned to broken necks if we attempted to jump out, and already a third generation was growing up—men who had never known anything of our ideals. Yenukidze and Bukharin would soon scarcely even be names to them.

I was horrified to hear my good friend and colleague Smurov, a man of working-class origin, who had started as a worker himself, telling me roundly that Marx's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat was so much twaddle for nitwits. Another of my friends, Kuritzyn, whose father had played his part in the Revolution, explained to me after the Second World War that the Soviet worker was 'by nature' capable only of submission. The more harshly he was ruled, the better all round, and the longer the great Russian country would prosper. Marxism-Leninism? He smiled. Of course these doctrines were necessary—as *opium for the people*.

What this meant in real life was well illustrated by the public health services. We of the upper stratum had our own Polyclinic. This was next door to the Polyclinic of the workers and lower ranks. Ours was a fine building, the other a flimsy hut. The principal activity of the workers' medical staff was to prevent the men from going off work—ours, on the other hand, cared for us like prize stock. We had our appointed medical officer, who regularly examined us. My dentist came to my own room at the Academy once a fortnight to inspect my teeth. There was no need to apply for sick leave: at the least sign of being run-down the M.O. ordered sick leave at a Red Army Sanatorium or Rest House. Our medical examinations were strictly private; no hint of collective man there. But the masses were seen by their doctors in public, several doctors using the same

room at once. No personal decency was allowed common men or women.

In the summer of 1938, I was ordered a period of rest at Gurzuf in the Crimea. Ordinarily, nothing could have pleased me more. But I was in the pink of health, I had my family and, as my rest period was a service order, they were not included. I preferred to stay in Moscow. Also, one of my best men, a technician named Vedeneyev, was seriously ill with T.B. of the lungs. Consequently I did not at once welcome the information that I was to go South for a month. The medical colonel was immediately on his guard. Thinking I was offended at being offered too short a period, he promised me longer leave next year. I asked if my ticket could be transferred to Vedeneyev: after all, we did claim to be a socialist country. I never saw a man more puzzled than that colonel, especially when I persisted.

Two hours later I had a call from Dr. Levin, a military doctor of the second rank, that is to say, a high-up in the profession. A clever, sensible man, and my own immediate health officer, Levin was a pupil of the Kirov Medical Academy of Leningrad, a non-Party man, a fine doctor but a cynical product of Stalinism.

Levin tried to argue me into sense. 'My dear fellow, you are not Tokaev, you are *the State's Tokaev*, you *must* do as you are told. Don't indulge in so many personal whims. State and Party don't want them. Conform, my dear fellow, conform, and you'll be O.K.'

Finally, Levin said: 'Enough empty argument. You say the Constitution gives every citizen the right to free treatment, but, my dear chap, *I am not interested in the Constitution*. I have a rota, and that rota has a place for you in Gurzuf *now*! Surely you understand what organisation means? I don't have to quote Lenin and Stalin to you, do I?'

The next day I was telephoned by my immediate superior, Lt.-General Andreyev, who ordered me to pack forthwith and go to Gurzuf for my month's leave. Not long after this Vedeneyev died. Cynics from the Political Department made fulsome speeches at his funeral. They even spoke of the constant concern the Soviet régime had shown for his health.

In fact, my stay at Gurzuf turned out to be very brief. But a short account of the Red Army Rest House from the inside may tell something of the period.

One reaches Gurzuf by mountain road from Simferopol. Even my journey there was instructive and eventful. A bus, ahead of our military truck, had a tyre-burst; then the jack broke and crushed

the chauffeur's hand. It needed more than the strength of the two drivers to shift the bus away from the precipice down which it had all but hurtled. The drivers did not dare ask us for assistance and I was the only passenger to offer help. Colonel Yeruslanov, a typical officer of the new kind, a bully in spotless uniform and glistening boots, merely tried to encourage one of the drivers with his boot. When the outraged driver pushed the officer away that gentleman drew his gun. It was a tense moment. I disarmed him. His fury was indescribable. Not only had I demeaned my uniform by handling tools, I had assaulted a superior officer. My position might have become serious and landed me in Siberia, had not another colonel, an army advocate, smoothed things out sufficiently for us to shake hands when we reached the Rest House.

Here, fully equipped with all my numbers—for ward, for bed, for prescribed diet, for mess order, etc.—I found myself sleeping next to another engineer of a very different sort. Gerasimov was one of those practical working engineers risen hastily from the ranks in the early days of post-revolutionary construction. Yeruslanov was crude and coarse in one way, Gerasimov was so in another. He was as untidy and dirty as the 'new order' type was polished. When I introduced them to each other the next day, Yeruslanov clicked his heels, saluted smartly, barked out *zdrazhla* while Gerasimov casually nodded his head and grunted *zdoróvo*!¹ A moment later, Yeruslanov was dressing Gerasimov down for speaking with such familiarity; but shortly after, during a boating expedition, Gerasimov had his revenge by giving Yeruslanov, who couldn't swim, a good ducking.

Meanwhile Syrov, the chauffeur with the crushed hand, was walking about without a penny of compensation. At the time of the accident I had startled everybody by taking over and driving the bus down the mountain. On the way, when I asked Syrov how much accident indemnity he was entitled to, he showed blank astonishment. A child of the new age, he had never heard of such a thing.

'But surely some of your pay is regularly docked for insurance?' I asked.

'I should think so indeed,' he said. 'Everybody pays, you have to, don't you?' But it never occurred to him to deduce that, in turn, when need arose, the State should pay him.

Those were the days of the Spanish Civil War. When an orderly

¹ *Zdrashla*: contraction of *zdravíazhelayu* i.e. 'I wish (you) health', a formal greeting used occasionally by subordinates in civilian life, more generally in the Army before the Revolution. Civilians, in general, used *zdrastvuyte* ('be well') or the popular contraction *zdoróvo*: 'well'.—*Translator*.

found me stretched out on the sand and handed me a telegram which read: 'Return to Moscow at once stop Head of Academy Divisional Commander Pomerantzev', I thought that either the NKVD had discovered I had had a meeting with Riz, or that I was to be despatched to Spain. That summer we were again busy on opposition work. Among other tasks in the South, I had been instructed by Comrade X to get in touch with Podgorny, one of our group working in Simferopol. I could not get an air passage to Moscow till the following day, and so was able to spend a profitable time with Podgorny.

A few hours later, I was again on the Red Square, and on my way up Gorky Street (formerly the Bolshaya Tverskaya), which at the Belorussian railway terminus becomes the Leningrad Chaussée. Here was the former Petrovsky Palace, where once the Tsars had halted before their triumphant entry into Moscow, and now the home of the Zhukovsky Academy.

Probably the average Western reader, especially if he is well informed about the poverty of the Soviet masses, cannot visualise the pomp and circumstance of this or for that matter any other institution of the officers' corps of the Soviet armed forces: armed sentries at the gates; semi-circular courtyard; marble staircase to the entrance; rectangular hall; and, striking symbol, immediately facing one inside, a safe of enormous dimensions, the Treasury of the Academy; on the safe lies a large pink velvet cushion on which rest the Orders of Lenin and of the Red Banner with which as an institution the Academy is decorated. Even if there is nobody about but the armed sentry guarding this shrine, an officer, stepping smartly through the massive silence, is bound by regulations to march past with hand stiffly to the salute. No civilians are allowed in here; the atmosphere is one of closely regulated military ritual.

From this hall stairs lead off, on the left, to the offices of the Political Commissar, on the right, to those of the Officer Commanding. On the second floor is the Rotunda, with marble walls, and many doors alternating with mirrors and portraits of distinguished Soviet aeronauticists. My photograph was once among them; *Grigori Alexandrovich Tokaev, aerodynamicist, diploma in aircraft construction May, 1937, Officer Commanding Aerodynamical Laboratory 1938-40, Youngest of all Candidates of Technology and Dozent of Aircraft Construction and Design, Senior Lecturer of the Faculty of Special Aircraft Equipment*. Now, no doubt, it is carefully preserved in the Special Section, with a new label: *Enemy of the People G. A. Tokaev*.

The Captain-Adjutant on whom I called first was a close friend; we were fellow athletes and parachutists. Concealing my anxiety as well as I could, my eyes sought his. He smiled, then bent and whispered: 'Congratulations, Grisha . . . No, no, it's a tremendous military secret . . . Your luck's in.'

When I entered his room, Pomerantzev was telephoning. With a wave of the hand he offered me a chair, but I preferred to wait standing to report. Before I could speak, however, he had come across to me and shaken my hand. 'Do sit down, Comrade Tokaev'—his manner was easy and he spoke intimately, using *thou* and not the formal *you*. 'Sorry I had to interrupt your holiday, but the service takes precedence, eh?'

He explained that new and extraordinary circumstances were compelling the Government to 'take urgent and energetic steps to build up the defence power of the Soviet Union'. Greater efforts would be required of the Academy's Aerodynamical laboratory. Comrade Voroshilov had warned us plainly that if we did not manage to deliver new and better goods we would have to answer for it to the Soviet people. Stalin had said that new men were needed, men who worked with pluck and daring, who could break with rigid, out-of-date ideas and who would use the laboratory not for small experiments but for rapid progress. The present head of the laboratory, said Pomerantzev, was engrossed in 'petty empiricism' and lacked 'breadth of vision'. Consequently, the Air Force Command had decided to replace him. Academician Yuriev and Professor Zemsky had been consulted and had strongly recommended me.

I received this appointment as head of the laboratory in July 1938. I was both extremely flattered and extremely alarmed. Under me were engineers and scholars, professors and lecturers, doctors and candidates of sciences of the first calibre. I need not have worried. Yuriev stood by me on all occasions, and there were only rare cases of hostility to my appointment. One of these was Brigade-Engineer Ogloblin. He was my unseated predecessor, and now he never missed an opportunity of damaging me.

I needed support, advice, guidance, in all conscience. It is no easy matter to head such an institution in the U.S.S.R. The bureaucratic tangle is incredible. The supreme political body directing Soviet aviation is the Aviation Section of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. But, aviation has to answer as well to the aviation sections of the General Staff and of the State Planning Committee of the Council of Ministers. Problems of military aviation are also dealt with by the Supreme Administration of the Air Force in the Ministry of Defence—and, on the political side, by the Political

Administration of the Air Force. Further, management on the scientific side is concentrated in an Administration of Higher Military Academies and in the Military Department of the Ministry of Higher Education. Nor is this all. Non-military aviation factories and experimental and research institutions are subordinate to the Ministry of the Air Industry. There is also a Supreme Administration of the Civilian Air Fleet, as well as a section of the Academy of Science which busies itself with aviation policy.

Thus, though the concentration of all power in the hands of a centralised State may suggest simplicity of authority, in fact it creates a witches' cauldron. Officially, my immediate chief was the Deputy Officer Commanding the Academy for Scientific Work and Studies, Lt.-General E. S. Andreyev of the Air Force, but in fact I found at once that I was to be 'administered' by many others: the heads of the Cadres and the Political Departments, the Commissars of the Academy and of the Faculty, a special section of the NKVD, Party leaders, and the Scientific and Research Department of the Academy. Nor was the internal organisation of my laboratory in itself simple. I had my own 'deputies' and assistants for (1) Subsonic aerodynamic wind tunnels, (2) Supersonic gasodynamic tunnels, (3) Air screws and fans, (4) Hydraulic installations, (5) a Constructors' Bureau, (6) the Precision Production Workshops and (7) all Administration and Supplies questions. In addition, attached to the laboratory were Chairs of Experimental Aerodynamics, Theoretical Aerodynamics, the Dynamics of Flight, and of Air Screws and Fans.

All this kept me on my toes. I had to know the men under me, as well as handle ticklish scientific problems. I had not been in the job more than two days before it became clear to me that freedom of action—freedom, in fact, to develop that very initiative for which Voroshilov and Stalin had called—was the last thing I could expect.

I was asked to call on the new head of the Special Department, Engineer-Major of State Security Andrianov. He had been through the Kazan Aviation Institute, but had recently been seconded to the NKVD under the Party-thousand system.

Andrianov said he thought we ought to get on well together. He and I were not like the 'practical engineers' of the Gerasimov type; we both spoke the language of science. He then introduced me to a senior lieutenant, whom I knew by sight and had always assumed to work in some minor capacity. Now I learnt that he was the NKVD man in charge of my laboratory.

Andrianov left us, and at once the NKVD took over: what were my first impressions? Of my laboratory? No, of my subordinates.

Were they politically sound? I replied that there was no more loyal body in the country. But that cut no ice. NKVD standards were different. At this first meeting their representative showed his teeth. Coldly he assessed my staff: Ivanov paid too much attention to women; Petrov had rather a long tongue; Sergeyev might be a good engineer, but he was politically unsound; Sviridov was an active Party member, but stank of Right-wing deviation; Professor Burago was unquestionably clever, but why did he still stand outside the Party? Bolotov worked well, but had twice been on the carpet in the Comsomol. And was not Yuri Gerlach a foreign spy? His grandparents had been German immigrants.

I replied that I had known Gerlach a very long time, and there could be no question of his loyalty. I was not clear what exactly the NKVD had against him.

NKVD: 'I do not consider it essential for you to know that. All I require of you is vigilance. We are on the brink of a war with Germany . . .'

Tokaev: 'I stick to the principles formulated by Comrade Stalin: to cherish our cadres, as our most precious material.'

NKVD: 'But I am not demanding Gerlach's immediate dismissal. For the present that step should not be taken. But keep him away from secret work.'

Tokaev: 'And if he wonders why?'

NKVD: 'The Soviet State is not obliged to account for itself to the individual citizen.'

Ninety-five per cent of the commissars with whom I had to deal between 1938 and 1945 were semi-literate. I doubt whether they could have worked in any other capacity. Some seemed to have clockwork inside them, not brains or hearts. Such a one was Colonel Illarionov, newly appointed Commissar of the Engineering Faculty.

One day he called me in. He held a fat forefinger high above his head. Had I an outside engineer named Babanov working in my lab? I had. 'And why, Comrade Tokaev?'

'And why not, Comrade Colonel?'

'What a way to reason! What a fine *Nachalnik*! Call yourself a Party member! Where is your revolutionary vigilance, Comrade Tokaev? I've only been working here a fortnight, but I already know that Babanov is a non-Party man and that he worked at the Kuchino Laboratory. And he doesn't even attend Marxism-Leninism courses. Do you know who this laboratory belonged to before the Revolution? The Capitalist Riabushinsky! The one who's working against the U.S.S.R. in France. Dismiss Babanov immediately! Do you understand? Immediately!'

As Babanov was a clever engineer, and in my opinion an honest man, I refused to dismiss him.

The same evening, Illarionov assembled Party members and began the attack on me. I was supported by Shulgovsky, a Major-General of the Aviation Engineering Service and acting Head of the Faculty, who pointed out that I was not subordinate to Illarionov, and that the Party and Government required the consolidation of authority of men in my position. But the matter was carried further, to the Political Department, and there was a special investigation. Illarionov wanted both Shulgovsky and me to be dismissed. Hitler was busy building Messerschmidts, but we were preoccupied with fruitless wrangling as to what Lenin did or did not say.

The result was a personal victory for Tokaev and Shulgovsky; neither he nor I suffered. Babanov of course did—he was dismissed over my head. ‘Why am I sacked? Do I work badly?’ he asked me. I wrote him the best testimonial I could. I never saw him again, and was told that some time later he hanged himself.

There was no end to it. My telephone rang. I took up the receiver and heard a great sound of hawking and spitting, so, having no patience with boorishness, I hung up. A moment later it rang again.

‘Tokaev speaking,’ I said.

‘Tokaev?’ bellowed the instrument. ‘What the devil do you mean by hanging up?’

It was Brigade Commissar Smokachov, who had replaced the civilised Divisional Commissar Smolensky. When I went to see him, he addressed me in the following manner: ‘F—— your mother, I’ll teach you to hang up when the Brigade Commissar is on the line!’

His business was about one of my laboratory assistants, a girl called Legeiko: why did I keep her on? I said I kept on many people, I needed assistants. Was she in the Comsomol? She was. How old was she? I did not know precisely, say 22–25. Had she access to secret work? She had. ‘She works in the big tunnel,’ I said.

‘In the tunnel?’ he cried, and I could see he had no notion what I meant.¹

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘in the big tunnel.’

‘Are you playing the fool, Tokaev?’

‘I am not.’

¹ In Russian the incident is perhaps even more ludicrous, for *truba*, the word used in the term *vozdushnaia truba*—wind tunnel—otherwise means *tube* or *pipe*.—Translator.

'Then please explain what you mean by saying that this woman works in the tunnel.'

I explained.

'Do you trust a whore?' I trusted Legeiko, and I would ask him not to refer to a member of my staff by such a term. 'What? You'll try to teach me? You take the part of a spy?'

For a moment I closed my eyes. If Legeiko were a spy, precious secrets had leaked. But what were the facts behind this allegation? No man has a moral right to remain indifferent when one of his subordinates is attacked.

I went straight to Andrianov, but he refused to disclose NKVD secrets. All he would say was that after the Revolution her parents remained on the wrong side of the Curzon Line in Poland; that on the day of Bukharin's execution Legeiko had been depressed and had cried; and that she had spoken to friends about Alksnis as a handsome, clever airman. The NKVD had not considered this sufficient ground to take action but sufficient to regard Legeiko as a bad security risk; they had informed Smokachov, who was eagerly proving his vigilance.

In fact, Legeiko was a rather frivolous, physically attractive, plump young thing, good at her lab work, completely uninterested in politics, in her free time occupied with clothes and dancing. The denunciation had been made by the Chairman of the Trade Union Committee of our Laboratory, Gushchin, of pure working-class origin. He had already secured the expulsion of Gerlach and Babanov, of Remnikov and Lobanov, of Grishin and Bolotov, of Paperny—now he had started on Legeiko.

I sent for Gushchin and asked him to resign voluntarily from my laboratory. He refused. The next day Andrianov advised me in a friendly way, for my own sake, as he put it, to leave Gushchin alone. Further, I was to 'forget' what I had learnt about Gushchin's secondary activities. This was not a suggestion but an order from the Special Department.

What happened next is best given in documents, of which I have kept copies.

1. *From:* *Nachalnik* of Aerodynamical Laboratory of the Zhukovsky Military Aeronautical Academy Military Engineer of Third Rank Tokaev, 4th September, 1938, Moscow.

To: The *Nachalnik* of the Cadres Department of the Military Air Forces of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

A REPORT

I bring to your notice that latterly the Special Department of the Zhukovsky Academy and Commissar of the Engineering Faculty Colonel Illarionov have been exercising considerable pressure on me, demanding the dismissal of a number of valued and important engineers and laboratory assistants. Without my knowledge or consent a number of my subordinates have already been dismissed by them, including Aerodynamicist-Engineer Babanov, solely because he was a non-Party man.

Taking into account the fact that latterly the Party and Government are applying the line of reinforcement of the authority of *Nachalniks* of the Red Army, and that the Laboratory in my charge is taken up with the solution of important problems of defence, I consider myself bound to make a protest against this pressure and request your urgent intervention in the sense of making a competent investigation of the numbers and quality of the staff of the Aerodynamical Laboratory.

2. *From:* *Nachalnik* of the Cadres Department of the Military Educational Establishments of the Administration of Cadres of the Air Forces, Colonel Yuryevich.

To: The *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Laboratory of the Zhukovsky Military Aeronautical Academy Comrade Tokaev.

In answer to your report of 4th September, I inform you that the Cadres Department of the Military Air Forces of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army does not undertake investigation of the internal questions of particular units or institutions of the Air Forces. It is the Cadres Departments of particular units or institutions which should do this.

At the same time I consider it necessary to warn you that questions of the dismissal of any assistant for causes not liable to be published is the competence of the organs of State security; hence you have concerned yourself in business which is not yours. Consequently I suggest that in future you should refrain from submitting such reports.

3. *From:* *Nachalnik* of the Zhukovsky Aerodynamical Laboratory of the Military Air Forces, Engineer-Mechanic of Aircraft Construction, Military Engineer of the Third Rank Tokaev.

10th December, 1938, Moscow.

To: The *Nachalnik* of the Cadres Department of the Zhukovsky Air Force Academy, Military Engineer of the Second Rank Comrade Reshetnikov.

A REPORT

I hereby report to you, in pursuance of the letter of the *Nachalnik* of the Cadres Department of the Educational Establishments of the Military Air Forces, informing me that the investigation of the numbers and quality of the cadres of the Aerodynamical Laboratory is in the competence of the Department of which you are head. In view of the extremely disturbed state of affairs, taking the form of increasing pressure on myself, from the Special Department and the Political Department, aiming at compelling me to dismiss a number of valued and important assistants, I request the appointment urgently of an investigation of the political or other loyalty of every individual working under me.

4. *From:* The *Nachalnik* of the Cadres Department of the Zhukovsky Air Force Academy, Military Engineer of the Second Rank Comrade Reshetnikov.

To: Military Engineer of the Third Rank Comrade Tokaev, *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Laboratory.

In answer to your letter of 10th December, 1938, I inform you that the department under me handles solely the formal appointment or dismissal of cadres of the Academy on the submission of the particular *Nachalnik* concerned, as also of keeping the personal dossiers of cadres. In essence we do not engage in investigation of the political loyalty of cadres. That is the work of the Political Department and the Special Department.

5. *From:* The *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Laboratory Military Engineer of the Third Rank Tokaev.

To: The *Nachalnik* of the Political Department of the Academy Colonel Commissar Comrade Priyetzhev.

Taking note of the fact that (1) when I was appointed to this post, the Command and the Political Department promised me every support, (2) that the Laboratory under me is engaged in the solution of urgent defence problems, and (3) it is my duty to point out in good time any causes hindering the successful fulfilment of these tasks, I hereby report to you that the Special Department and the Commissar of the Engineering Faculty have latterly begun to interfere in my functions and have dismissed my subordinates without my knowledge or consent. This is detrimental to the working of the Laboratory. Engineers and laboratory assistants alike have lost confidence. Work is becoming more and more strained. At the same time I have established positively that I myself am under

surveillance of the two Special Departments, of the Academy and of Aircraft Factory Number 39.

I consider it indispensable to draw your attention to the circumstances that this state of affairs cannot be favourable to good work. I have requested Army Commander of the Second Rank Comrade Loktionov, Army Commissar of the Second Rank Comrade Shchadenko, the Cadres Department of the Air Forces, the Cadres Department of the Academy, and even the head of the Special Department Comrade Andrianov, to take the necessary steps. But from not one of these have I so far obtained practical assistance. I therefore request your urgent intervention in the sense of carrying out an investigation into the state of the cadres of the Aerodynamical Laboratory. If this is not done I shall be obliged to ask to be relieved of the post I occupy.

6. *From:* The Regimental Commissar Priyetzhev, Political Department of the Academy.

To: Comrade Tokaev, *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Laboratory.

Comrade Tokaev,

According to my enquiries, your former subordinates were dismissed by directive of responsible organs, the activities of which are subject neither to criticism nor supervision. Your duty, the duty of a *Nachalnik* and Party member, is to maintain your team in a permanent state of high revolutionary vigilance. In regard to the construction of defence works, the Party warns you that these are to be completed punctually in the periods allotted, and in outstanding quality.

Please take note of this and execute.

7. *From:* *Nachalnik* of Aerodynamical Zhukovsky Air Force Laboratory, Military Engineer of the Third Rank Tokaev.

To: Deputy *Nachalnik* of the Academy, Lt.-General of the Engineering Aviation Service Andreyev.

8th January, 1939.

REPORT

In view of the exceptional difficulties which deprive me of any real authority over my subordinates, about which I have more than once reported to you, I hereby request to be relieved of the duties of *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Laboratory and afforded opportunity to devote myself completely to my research work.

8. *From:* Deputy *Nachalnik* of the Academy Lt.-General of the Engineering Aviation Service Andreyev.

To: Comrade Tokaev, *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Laboratory.

The *Nachalnik* of the Academy and I have discussed your report and hereby inform you that there can be no question of complying with your request. The Command considers you the right man in the right place. It is also informed of the difficulties which hinder you and is determined to take immediate steps to have these removed.

STATE SECURITY UNDER BERIA

THROUGHOUT MY tussle with the authorities the work of the laboratory went ahead. Convinced anti-fascist as I was, I believed that the threat of war with the Axis powers made it our sacred duty to work as hard as possible. We were building up a new gasodynamics laboratory for supersonic speed work, and a hydraulics laboratory with first-class equipment. I was given exceptionally loyal support by Academician Yuriev and Professor Zemsky. We were making aircraft and armament such as the Red forces had never known before. Many were the nights I slept in my study. Since coming to England, I have often wondered what British research workers would have done in our conditions.

There was never enough money. 'I have an allocation of 12,000 roubles,' I told Shchadenko, Deputy People's Commissar for Defence, 'but I need 16,000. We all believe this to be necessary.'

'Comrade Tokaev, what do I care what your staff think? You are a Party member and must know that you have to organise your work in such a way that the allocation is enough.'

To supplement our budget we worked for civilian aircraft factories. We put on three shifts in the twenty-four hours, one exclusively on outside work. We squeezed the last ounce of energy out of ourselves. We were a military research establishment, and so could order the men to work overtime. The Trade Union agreed that this, as a patriotic duty, should be paid at special *low* rates.

Few were those who complained. However, there was one precision mechanic, Kurnakov, an excellent worker, who demanded more money—or permission to leave. 'To hell with my motherland,' he said, and then, knowing my own origins, reproached me with being a traitor to the working-class. I could have caused him serious trouble for his frankness, but he knew that I would not do so. In the end, reluctantly I let him go. He was a rare exception.

No doubt the fact that we were all men and women of higher education and specialised skills, partly accounted for our public-spiritedness. Besides, the war clouds were darkening our horizon, we had our duty to our country.

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About that time, the American aviator, Lindbergh, visited us. A tremendous fuss was made of him; he was also kept under the closest surveillance. Awaiting his visit I was looking out of my office window when I saw Commissar Andrianov—in civilian clothes! He came straight in to see me. 'When Lindbergh comes,' he said, 'please introduce me to him as your second-in-command on the administrative side.'

'Preposterous,' I said, but I was compelled to agree.

Lindbergh was accompanied by the famous Soviet airman Kokkinaki. Kokkinaki was having a poor time: Lindbergh was bored, he would not even drink—whereas Kokkinaki drank, or would have liked to drink, like a fish. The trouble was—so Kokkinaki said—that Lindbergh everywhere met only NKVD men rigged out as aviation experts; he was bored to sulkiness and he would not look at anything. In our big wind-tunnel, where models off the secret list were shown, I did my best for him, but Lindbergh might have been both deaf and dumb.

When it was over I asked Andrianov if he seriously thought that Lindbergh was a spy. He did not. But, he said, the Government did. Lenin had coined the phrase that communism was the Soviet régime plus electrification; now it was the Soviet régime plus counter-espionage against capitalist encirclement.

No less entertaining was the visit to our lab of the Minister of Aviation of Republican Spain. It is characteristic that I have forgotten even his name, although I learned some words of Spanish with which to greet him, and was rewarded by a kiss full on the lips. This 'ally' was accompanied by the GOC's deputy on the political side. The translator was a woman agent of the General Staff.

The Soviet Union was at the time very interested, not only in the Spanish as a revolutionary people, but in Spain as a strategic base. The sovietisation of the Iberian peninsula and France would have greatly embarrassed the United States and Britain. But by 1938 the Republican Army was in a sorry state, and the Kremlin had written off its Iberian dream. The problem was then how to withdraw. First the supply of arms ceased. Then no one was allowed to volunteer and no one was sent; the shameful betrayal began. Though I have no documents with which to back my words, I declare in all seriousness that in the second half of 1938 the Kremlin was much more concerned to find the basis for a deal with Hitler and Mussolini than to save the Republicans. When the right time comes, this shall be proved.

For the present, let a Party conference of the Leningrad District of Moscow, held by Shchadenko, support what I say: I was one of

some seven hundred people present. There were three main points in what the Central Committee spokesman told us. (1) Spain had been an important battle-ground of world revolution, hence the U.S.S.R. could be proud of what it had done. (2) Events had however developed unfavourably, and the interests of the said world revolution now required us to withdraw, in order to prevent the U.S.S.R.'s political or military authority from being called into question. (3) In any case, the Spanish war had been a valuable opportunity for testing military equipment. It was this that interested Shchadenko most. For the International Brigade he had only contempt: 'A rag-tag and bob-tail mob,' he called it, 'with no common language and no proper organisation.'

Some time after this my efforts in the Aerodynamical Laboratory received brief but (while the prospect lasted) dazzling recognition. I was suddenly summoned to the Political Department and informed that I was to be recommended for the highest State decoration, the Order of Lenin. Certain formalities would have to be observed; I began my preparations for the ceremony.

However, one week later I was again summoned to the Political Department, this time to be told that 'the responsible organs'—i.e. the Special Department of the NKVD—had held up the recommendation till 'certain little questions' had been cleared up. I was not told what the little questions were, but I left that office exceedingly alarmed. The trouble might be only my stubborn resistance to the NKVD over the matter of my staff—but it also might be some leakage concerning an underground meeting which I had recently attended.

Neither guess was right. The Special Department, combing through some unfortunate's dossier, had come upon an indirect reference to my ties with Osepyan, the former Deputy Head of the Political Administration of the Armed Forces. After the destruction of the Bukharin group, Osepyan had been arrested and, as far as I knew, shot. Past contact with him might have serious consequences.

Smokachov questioned me. Had I known Osepyan? Had I met him? Of course I had. But I put it to my interrogator—hadn't he often shaken hands with Osepyan himself? Primitive types are generally cowards, and Smokachov's face turned scarlet. Supposing I put such questions publicly, at a Party assembly? These were the early days of the advent of Beria after Yezhov's fall. The climate of political repression was changing, and Smokachov was not sure of himself. Hence I suffered no inconvenience, beyond the profound moral inconvenience of finding myself neither sus-

pected nor trusted and minus the Order of Lenin! Alas, this sorry position is one in which men find themselves more and more frequently in the world today. A new species of humanity is being established, a new category of undermen, those whose honesty the Government cannot impugn, but whom they refuse to trust.

However, I was thankful for small mercies; at least I was not to be hauled before a Party assembly, as so often in the past—though even this had its bad features.

It was Beria's diagnosis of the danger of Yezhov's excesses that had induced Stalin to trust him and brought him to power. Throughout the country these excesses had cast their shadow. At one sitting alone, the Central Committee of the Azerbaidzhan Party had expelled 279 members, the Ukrainian Stalinsk Provincial Committee 72, the Ordzhonikidze Regional Committee 101—it was the same everywhere. In one part of the Ukraine (Zmiyevsky Region) revolutionary vigilance suddenly stripped all schools of most of their teachers. The fear of being suspected of lack of vigilance drove local fanatics to denounce not only Bukharinists, but also Malenkovists, Yezhovists, even Stalinists. It is of course not impossible that they were also egged on to do so by concealed oppositionists! Hence Beria's task when he was summoned from Georgia by Stalin was to head a secret commission of enquiry into Yezhov's work.

To give Beria his due, he pulled no punches. At a closed joint session of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the Party, held in the autumn of 1938, he declared that if Yezhov were not a deliberate Nazi agent he was certainly an involuntary one. He had turned the central offices of the NKVD into a breeding ground for fascist agents. He had scorned citizens' constitutional rights and used illegal methods of extorting information, to such an extent that he had set quite non-political people against the Government. For a rank-and-file member of the Central Committee to say this was the height of courage.

The impression produced on Stalin and Molotov was tremendous. The Central Committee resolutions dismissing Yezhov (Member of the Politbureau, the Orgbureau and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Secretary of the Central Committee, and People's Commissar of Internal Affairs) were written in Beria's hand. Beria's first acts as head of the NKVD, were the arrest of Yezhov and the issue of orders quashing an enormous number of sentences and recently-started proceedings. People who had been unjustly repressed were even indemnified by the State. Special commissions enquired into the past of convicted persons.

Under Yezhov it would have been unthinkable for Smokachov to let me off with only a warning: 'Anyone can see from your dossier,' he said, 'that your tail's pretty bedraggled . . . But it's not easy to catch you out. I am sure you are not quite in the clear in your dealings with enemy-of-the-people Osepyan—there's no smoke without fire. But the organs of State security so far have nothing to charge you with, that's all.'

I was a free man—but only in the Soviet meaning of the word, and that included being spied upon to an intolerable degree.

It was in December, 1938, that I met a charming girl, Nadia. She was very forthcoming. She was also beautiful. We skied together. I held her hands. I noticed another skier using his Leica, but paid no attention to it; I did not realise that a few hours later a photograph of Nadia and myself lay on the desk of the Air Attaché of the German Embassy. For Nadia, as I later learned from the Special Department, was the tool of her lover Suvorov, and Suvorov was one of Hitler's men.

But that was not all. A few days after our ski-ing excursion, Nadia and I met at an Academy dance, and she introduced me to another enchantress named Valia, who, she said, was dying to meet me. I was a little puzzled at her calling me formally Comrade *Nachalnik*, and as though hinting at something, asking how long I had known Nadia. But I thought no more about it till, a few days later, Valia rang me up from a public telephone box and asked me to meet her at the entrance to the Central Airport. I took her out to a concert, then to supper. It was not only that there is an old Adam in every man; I had also begun to smell a rat. When a certain leading question I put to her made her blush furiously, my suspicions were confirmed. I said no more but arranged another meeting, but before I kept it I reported the whole affair to Andrianov. His instructions were to keep to the arrangement and to go on seeing Valia.

Next time we met in her miserable lodging in one of the many slummy timber barracks at the north-west corner of the Frunze Central Aerodrome. Valia worked on the newspaper of an important aircraft factory, she was, so to speak, 'in aviation'. After tea, she insisted on going out. She was very low-spirited, and eventually told me her story. A year before this she had met and become engaged to a civilian pilot, Chernyshev, who had suddenly vanished without a trace. Then Nadia approached her and Valia learned that Chernyshev was a German agent, now under arrest. Nadia admitted that she and her lover Suvorov were also German agents. She had blackmailed Valia, already compromised by her association

with Chernyshev, into working for them. Valia's first task was to worm her way into the editorial offices of the Central Hydro-Aerodynamic Institute. For this she needed my help.

Now comes the twist which is revealing: at this point Valia was summoned by the Special Department of the factory where she worked, and *they* instructed her to obey Suvorov's orders: that is, to work for the Nazis in order to entangle me. 'Why, why?' cried poor Valia, already sentimental about me. 'Is it possible that there are traitors even in the Special Department? Anyway, now I've told you, and you must take care of yourself. You do realise, don't you, that Nadia is spying on you?'

'Tell me,' I said, 'how did they think you could entangle me?'

Again Valia turned scarlet. She was a decent girl; the very fact that she took the enormous risk of unburdening herself to me showed how disgusted she was by what they had tried to force on her. For the Special Department man had simply told her to go the whole hog, in short, to become my mistress.

Much propaganda is made concerning the abolition of prostitution in the Soviet Union. Nothing is said of the use made of prostitution by the NKVD. Perhaps the simple prostitute in capitalist countries, who offers physical love for hard cash, is after all the more decent.

Valia was one of the minor tragedies in my life. For what could I do to help her? She did not weep, but the note of anguish in her voice was worse than any tears. But I was obliged to remember that already two espionage systems were on my heels. It was not long before Valia's fate was sealed: she knew too much and she had failed her exploiters. She was given a short period by the NKVD in which to arrange her affairs and to go into 'voluntary' exile to Magadan, in the far eastern tip of Siberia.

All that I had learned I reported to Andrianov. It was instructive to find that he, who might have been expected to know it all, knew only that Nadia was 'suspected' of being a German agent. Of Valia's real doings and of the activities of the Special Department of her aircraft factory, he had never been informed. I therefore went to the head of Valia's factory and requested him to call in his Special Branch man. But though I went for this NKVD man with all the authority I possessed, threatening even to report the whole matter personally to Beria, he refused to talk in front of the manager, and even when I saw him alone would only say: 'Each man has his own duty, Comrade Tokaev.'

I then took the matter to Beria's assistant, Gardinashvili, who asked me to put in a written complaint, which I did. I also went to

Smokachov and said I was tired of all this; if they did not trust me, let them remove me, or else stop two services shadowing me.

'Comrade Tokaev,' said Smokachov, 'the Party and the Government know best what to do.'

I said I was speaking of arbitrary hooliganism on the part of Special Branch men, and that I was outraged at finding I was being spied on by the Special Department of an institution other than my own.

'Don't go off at the deep end, Comrade Tokaev,' was all he said.

I was not satisfied. Whatever I had done, I had never given anybody cause to suspect me of being a traitor to my country. Never had anyone of my family been anybody's spy; I doubt if any Ossetian was ever a spy; I have never heard of one. I held then and hold now that this question of loyalty is a matter of character and personality. I have never questioned the right of a State to protect itself and to take precautions; but I condemn this stupid, mechanical, unenlightened procedure, by methods of provocation and elaborate deceit. Once proved to be an honest man, one should be trusted as an honest man.

I went to the NKVD man who was in charge of security in my laboratory. I suggested to him that the most important secret in that institution was its head, and that he should therefore see to it that I was protected from the trickeries of spies and *agents provocateurs*.

'Oh, but we do protect you,' he said, with what was either irony or naïveté. 'You can rest assured that we keep a close eye on all you do.'

A little later, in February, 1939, the same NKVD man told me that he knew all about Suvorov's attempts to penetrate both my laboratory and the Hydro-Aerodynamic Institute. This led to a frank discussion between us in which I came to realise that if Beria's rule was more liberal than Yezhov's, it was only at the cost of introducing new forms of corruption into Soviet life.

I asked my Senior Lieutenant Commissar why, if they knew about Suvorov, they did not simply arrest the man. Why, instead, did they assist him to debauch decent girls in order to achieve his alien ends? His answer was that the innocence of a dozen Soviet girls did not matter, if by its sacrifice they could expose another spy. The end justified the means.

Was he right? Or was I right to hold that the State should not merely defend its secrets, but also the honour of its citizens?

I had raised a troublesome question; I had stirred up a lot of mud. Now I was told that henceforth the Commissar himself would



Yezhov



Beria

keep personal control over my laboratory, and I was not to engage or dismiss anybody without his agreement. I protested that this meant that the laboratory would not be run by me but by the secret police. He refused to move from his decision, but he did offer me some sort of explanation of his methods. There had been a great weakness, he said, in the old pre-Beria system of denunciations of suspected dissidents at open Party meetings. Such accusations had, in fact, helped the oppositionists by showing them who were their potential sympathisers. 'Now we work more secretly,' he said. 'No case is ever brought before a general assembly. When an enemy has finally been tracked down he is arrested and liquidated as silently as possible, and only the organs of State security know why a man has disappeared.'

I had several discussions of this sort with Andrianov, and one day I remarked ironically that as a matter of fact it would be difficult to find a more dubious character in the Academy than myself. He laughed. He knew all about my tails, he said. But I was not to forget that the NKVD worked now on the assumption that a man who 'rebelled' openly was to be trusted; it was the quiet ones who needed watching. They were convinced and remained convinced to the very end that I would never be a traitor—and rightly.

TROUBLE IN MY LABORATORY

IF THE spy mania was one characteristic of this period there were others which were no less ominous.

Thus in 1938 the *Short Course of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (bolsheviks)* was made the only authorised text-book of the history of the Revolution and of Stalinism. Today the contents of this book are all that the majority of Soviet people know of the past half century of the history of their country. From it they have learned that Trotsky and Zinoviev, Kameniev and Bukharin, Rykov and Yenukidze, were foreign spies who did all they could to prevent the Revolution and later to destroy it; the Revolution was started by Lenin but, above all, made by Stalin. The adoption of the *Short Course* by a decision of the Central Committee laid the foundations of official singleness of thought.

From mid-1938 I was one of the outside lecturers of the Central House of the Red Army and of the Moscow Party Committee. One day we were addressed by Mehliis, Deputy People's Commissar of Defence. Assuming that war was imminent, he gave us new directives for our ideological work.

(1) We were to scotch any tendency to treat Marxism and Leninism as separate sciences.

(2) All text-books other than the new one were to be destroyed, and we were to make sure that only the views expressed in the *Short Course* were given credence; this was particularly important because, though all heresies (such as Trotskyism and Bukharinism) had been eradicated, correct views had not yet had time to influence the masses and the army.

(3) Stalin worship was to be inculcated. The argument ran thus: (a) we were indebted to the Party and Government for destroying the people's enemies and establishing socialism; (b) these triumphs were achieved by the Party and Government by reason of Stalin's leadership; (c) therefore, Stalin was the symbol and personification of wisdom, ideology, policy, strategy and tactics.

In other words, as terrestrial life is to the sun, so were our armed forces to Comrade Stalin.

Side by side with the enforcement of this general ideological

framework, two other phenomena deepened my disquiet and, eventually, got me into trouble.

The Labour Laws of December, 1938, and January, 1939, while creating new rewards (such as the order of 'Hero of Socialist Labour', 'Labour Merit' and 'Labour Distinction') introduced measures tightening discipline, and in these two stood out:

(1) Labour 'Cards' or books became obligatory. Nobody could be engaged or released from his job without his Card, which was kept in the offices of the institution which employed him. In a country where all industry was in the same hands, this was a formidable instrument of control, a serf-making instrument.

(2) By a Decree of December 29th, 1938, managements were required to work with the heads of the Trade Unions in a relentless drive to enforce 'labour discipline and internal order'. Late arrival at work at the beginning of a shift or after the midday break, early leaving or any wasting of State time in lavatories, became flagrant infringements of discipline, punishable by fines, demoting, trial and even expulsion from the Party and Trade Union. Heads of institutions who were negligent in the enforcement of these regulations were themselves liable to administrative sanctions or to trial by a criminal court.

As usual the new regulations were applied with zeal. In one shop of the Menzhinsky Aircraft Factory in Moscow, time-keepers with stop watches were posted at the doors at every break and outside the lavatories. In fact nobody could go to the lavatory without first getting permission from the supervisor.

A tragic proof of the mental automatism which developed is that not only did men obey, they also kept an eye open for defaulters and were ready to join at once in the hue and cry against them. Of course there were some cases of revolt but these were so insignificant that they are not worth mentioning.

When I look back on my life, I think that these outrageous regulations upset me more than anything else. I had the impression of living in a nightmare. I belonged to a Party whose Secretary-General, Stalin, had signed these laws which I considered to be fascist laws; I was head of an institution belonging to a Government whose Prime Minister, Molotov, had signed them. I had been proud to be a member of the Trade Union whose head, Shvernik, was the third co-signatory. If I obeyed these laws, I betrayed myself, I betrayed the working class. What indeed had we achieved in the U.S.S.R. but Trade Unions like Mussolini's, piously declared 'free', but in fact the instruments of the centralised State? Yet what way out had I?

I felt a strange inner re-birth—as if I had slept through the thirties and only now awakened to reality. My passion for the trade union idea had been intense. I had been the child, the protégé of the Trade Unions of the twenties. Now, Shvernik seemed the most loathsome traitor of all. Bukharin, Rykov, Yenukidze, had all sized him up correctly but I had never dreamed that he could sink so low.

However, my immediate difficulties with the authorities arose, not as yet over the labour laws, but over another phenomenon which, curiously enough, accompanied the new policy towards the workers. This was the spread of what came to be called *blat* among the middle and upper strata of the hierarchy.

You will not find *blat* in Dahl's dictionary. It is a word of the twentieth century, particularly of post-revolutionary days; indeed it belongs to the world of bureaucratic barricades and entanglements, through which your *blatnik* knows how to find his way.¹

About this time I acquired a prime specimen of a *blatnik* in my laboratory.

Konchin was an almost illiterate army quartermaster. He had been employed on outside contracts as transport man at a provisions warehouse, where I suppose he worked his *blat* apprenticeship. Then he appeared in uniform, at first without any precise rank; then somehow he acquired the flashes of a senior lieutenant of the Supply Service and later he graduated to a rank equivalent to that of a captain. Finally, he established himself as head of the Quarters and Exploitation Section, a post hitherto usually occupied by a brigade general, or at the least a colonel. Even Pomerantzev, head of the whole Academy, never knew how Captain Konchin got there.

Now, well entrenched, he moved all his relations from the back of beyond to Moscow and housed them at the Academy's expense in apartments with good furniture, telephones and supplies. He with his wife and children occupied a professor's flat in the block reserved for the senior teaching staff. Nobody knew how all that happened. All dwellings in the Soviet Union belong to the State; these luxury apartments were in great demand and very carefully allocated—or so we had supposed. Konchin, of course, had the required chits; but how did he get them?

However, it was not long before Konchin was caught out and handed over to the proper authorities for investigation. We were

¹ *Blat*: the French have the verb *se débrouiller*; contemporary English has *contact-man*, *spiv*: both are connected with the same process. 'Fixing' 'wangling' 'working a racket'. The way to get through all regulations one cannot break is *blat*. The man who finds his way through is a *blatnik*.—Translator.

convinced that his fate was sealed, that no power could save him from life sentence in a labour camp.

But with the liquidation of 'spies' and 'scum', the fortunes of swindlers seemed to have improved. I was soon to find out that the Konchin story had only just begun. One day there was a ring on my telephone marked TK (a direct line used exclusively for conversations with higher authority and in my absence kept locked). It was no less than our GOC Pomerantzev asking me—*entre nous*—if I did not perhaps need an assistant on the business and supplies side of my lab. All requisitions were for ever in short supply, and for a moment the chance of a special assistant for that work lightened my heart. Had I not made fruitless applications for one, till, sick to death of negative answers, I had given up? Then Pomerantzev said slowly: 'Only I'm afraid I must admit it's that rogue Konchin.'

'Is this a joke, Comrade General?' I asked.

'I'm damned if it's a joke,' said the General. 'Somebody up on top has detailed the scoundrel to me . . .' He mentioned a name. 'In fact,' he said, 'I have had several calls from top-level bosses asking me to fix up Konchin.'

I told my understanding chief firmly that there was no room for Konchin in my lab, and I thought that was the end of it. But not at all. The very next day Lt.-General Andreyev of the Aviation Engineer service rang me up to say that the top-level boys had asked him to find a place for Konchin. Andreyev was followed by Major-General Finogenov. They could give me nothing in black-and-white, no minute, no, it was all 'off the record' pressure, calculated to produce the desired effect, since nobody liked to get into the bad books of the big bosses.

Konchin's protector named by Pomerantzev was Divisional Commissar Ovchinkin. He was the political deputy of the GOC of all the Armed Forces and could easily crush me if I did not comply. Resistance was therefore senseless. So there I was, interviewing a first-class spiv who had decided he wanted a job in my lab. It has never been my habit to beat about the bush. I asked Konchin outright what had saved him at an earlier investigation. He grinned cheerfully and answered with admirable frankness.

'In the age of socialism,' he said, '*blat*'s the answer to all difficulties. You don't ever need a hundred roubles, you need a hundred friends. Don't fuss about the letter of the law, just smile at the chaps in authority and all the lawyers in the world are on your side. All you need to know is the right button to press, and the NKVD is no trouble at all.'

I warned him that he would find it hard going in the Aerodynamical

Laboratory if those were his rules of life. I said I was taking him on conditionally for a trial period only, and at the lowest rate of pay. He went on grinning and replied that 'at the present stage' he was really not interested in position or trial or even pay, all he wanted was 'a little job' in my institution. However small the pay, if he could manage to last out a week, all would be well.

I did not ask by what means; I already knew the answer: *blat*. Konchin had *blat*. For *blat* means good friends in the right places.

Two months later Konchin was still with us. By then he was beginning to get busy. He had made one of the laboratory staff a present of a brand new, powerful, foreign-made radio set. Such an article was an extreme rarity in 1939, even in high circles in Moscow, and never sold to a private individual. So I sent for Konchin and asked him where he had got the set, and how. He said it was 'a little token of recognition' he had been given before he came to me.

'Recognition of what?' Had he not been dismissed and handed over to the courts for *bad* work?

'Oh yes,' he said, 'there was a spot of trouble, but now I'm in the clear. And I'm grateful to the Party and the Government for making it up to me for my innocent sufferings.'

Who had made it up to him? *The Air Force Administration!*

Needless to say, I made enquiries. Of course there had been no such compensation; at least, not officially. When I pressed my enquiries Ovchinkin warned me, politely, 'not to stick my nose in where I wasn't allowed to put my paws'.

This was not the end, and after other misdemeanours I told this spiv that if he did not toe the line I would have to insist on a public enquiry. So now he turned his attention to my wife, offering her presents and insinuating that I was far too puritanical. I was 'out of touch with reality', I did not understand that 'socialism had been more or less established' in the U.S.S.R., and there were privileges which I did not take advantage of. I was a crazy idealist, it was high time I became sensible. Why shouldn't the Tokaevs have a larger flat, a motor-car, a better radio set, better household supplies? 'It's only practical,' he argued. 'You just persuade your old man not to hobble me the way he does.'

When I heard this, I was furious, and for the first time Konchin was a little scared of me. For a while, there was a lull in shady dealings in the Aerodynamical Laboratory. But one morning I found a really lovely radio set in my office, and my secretary announced that it was 'a little token of Mr. Konchin's gratitude'. She also said I ought to be practical. What if it was *blat*, wasn't

blat now the recognised way of getting things? We really could not afford to lose Konchin, she said, he was worth his weight in gold, there was nothing he could not get. I knew my secretary; she was an honest, decent woman. Her words revealed to me how far towards corruption we, in our socialist society, had gone.

I demanded Konchin's dismissal. Pomerantzev was afraid to sign the order. I went to Ovchinkin. Ovchinkin dressed me down. Why did I have to interfere in matters which did not concern me? My job was aerodynamics.

'I am not only an aerodynamicist, Comrade Commissar, I am also a Soviet citizen. Also, as head of my laboratory, it is my duty to condemn the theft of State property . . . Konchin is my official assistant, therefore I am responsible for whatever he does.'

'And I am your chief,' said Ovchinkin. 'I am responsible for what you do, to Party and Government.'

'Comrade Commissar, if you refuse to dismiss this man whom I have discovered is involved in *blat* and crooked dealings, I shall be obliged to complain to the Central Committee of the Party.'

I thought Ovchinkin would draw his revolver and shoot me, he was so enraged. He *ordered* me not to do anything of the sort. He *ordered* me to leave Konchin alone. He said I was impudent, provocative, undisciplined. He would have to consider my dismissal. He would teach me 'civilised military behaviour'.

Thus the higher democracy of workers and peasants! Of course, I ignored Ovchinkin's orders and submitted a report. It is characteristic of the times that I do not even remember who was then the head of the Air Force; the changes had been positively kaleidoscopic: Alksnis—Loktionov—Smushkievich—Rychagov. But I do recall that the response was what I desired: an enquiry into the reasons for forcing Konchin upon me, and into Konchin's *blat*.

Alas, in the dark all cats are grey. The enquiry was placed in the hands of Konchin's preceptor, General Finogenov, himself a first-class *blat* specialist. The findings were a foregone conclusion. Pomerantzev gave me a friendly warning that if I did not stop swimming against the stream, I would drown. It was stupid of me to imagine I could succeed where so many others had failed.

'You still don't understand either the real nature of State centralisation or the strength of the Soviet bureaucratic machine,' he said. 'If you fight Konchin and Finogenov, you fight Ovchinkin and Illarionov, and if you fight them, you fight the Party and the Government, for they're the real rulers, they have encircled the whole Kremlin. We have set up a People's Commissariat of State Supervision, but the men who run it are the biggest *blatniks* of all. And

that's how it will be until such time as the U.S.S.R. has cadres with real technological and administrative knowledge.'

How right Pomerantzev was. So far from loosening Konchin's hold, my efforts only reinforced it. One month later, again by orders from above, his son and daughter also joined my staff! He himself was irrepressible. He seemed to bear me no grudge. Perhaps he ascribed my hostility to the eccentricity of a scholar. Anyway, he was soon busy 'winning' things for the laboratory itself.

We were not only short of funds, but also cramped by a genuine shortage of supplies. I doubt whether the Western reader can imagine the scarcity of writing paper which then prevailed. Industry swallowed vast quantities. In the U.S.S.R. the printing of books and periodicals was constantly expanding, as education and learning reached people who before had been completely illiterate. Propaganda consumed paper gluttonously. We were often reduced to using the reverse of manuscript sheets—and this was paper, remember, that you would scorn to use even on one side only. The habit of preserving every scrap has still not left me.¹

You can therefore imagine everybody's excitement when a lorry loaded with an immense drum of paper was seen to turn into our courtyard. It was the more amazing since for some time I had not made any application for paper. And then the door opened, and there was—Konchin, beaming with pride over his latest capture, and a disjointed story about Party and Government and concern for science. The news flashed through the whole place. There were excited telephone calls; the secretarial staff was hysterical with delight. It rent my heart to have to force Comrade Konchin to explain; I demanded not just words, but documents. Of course, there were none. But, he assured me, nobody in the world could prove that anything illegal had been done. Somebody had signed off a drum of State paper as consumed, that was all, and now the State would use it. If we didn't accept the windfall, somebody else would.

I did not know what to say, and my silence alarmed Konchin. 'Please,' he said, blinking nervously, 'let this be a little sign of my sincere loyalty to our laboratory.' I hardened my heart, not from puritanism, but because it was so clear that this *blat* was simply the reverse side of Stalin's reactionary medal.

Setting the course of my own ruin, I disregarded Pomerantzev's

¹ And how well the translator knows this! The author's original MS is gay with neatly cut sheets of all kinds of paper, including the debris of brown-paper parcels and old envelopes all pieced together with plastic surgery and rigorously trimmed to the same size.—*Translator*.

warning and ordered Konchin to transport the paper to the general store of the Zhukovsky Academy. I also made an official application for the removal of Konchin and of his son and daughter. From that day on my position deteriorated. Now that my hostility to *blat* was overt, the master *blatniks* at the top were resolute in seeking the first political opportunity to bring me down, and once battle was joined over a political matter, even my closest friends and associates held back. The conflict which the *blatniks* were looking for arose over the question of labour discipline.

The laboratory had worked out its own set of rules, one of which was that no man might come to work or leave as much as a minute after or before the appointed time. Clocking-in was done by numbered metal counters, one for each man, which had to be taken from their hooks not later than one minute before the beginning of the work period and could not be replaced until two minutes after its close. Before extending this rule to high-ranking scientists, I called a conference of leading cadres. Not a single man supported my contention that the high ranks should be exempt from the rule. They insisted that socialism had destroyed classes, therefore everybody should be treated alike. This line was taken by Party spokesmen, who insisted that since the new law made no mention of exemptions, we had no right even to discuss the matter. Nevertheless, I did discuss it with my opposite number at TzAGI¹ (Major-General Engineer Petrov). We agreed to keep in step with each other and issued orders for the liberation from the rule of professors and assistant professors. Obviously, if a man did not have to give an early lecture, the community would profit by the extra work he put in in his study.

Konchin at once busied himself with charges that Academician Yuriev was an hour late or Professor Zemsky left an hour early, and all the usual loathsome machinery went into action: special enquiries, reports and counter-reports, visits from the GOC and from the Commissar, endless idiotic questions, threats of Siberia. Had less important men been implicated, the argument would soon have been over, but two of the biggest figures in Soviet aeronautical science were involved, and they used all their authority to defend my declaration. The case developed into a protracted duel between the brains of Soviet aviation and the bone-headed bosses of the State bureaucracy. Inevitably, my order was quashed and I was warned against attempting any further 'sabotage of Soviet law'. In spite of my defeat Comrade X and my other opposition friends

¹ The Soviet equivalent of the American N.A.C.A.

were delighted by the incident. Anything was better than the universal acquiescence and mental automatism.

It was not until January, 1941, on the very eve of the Axis attack on the U.S.S.R., that the next struggle took place. I had come to my office as usual at eleven and found everything in order. Then a petty Trade Union boss, Gushchin, came in and, after a few pharisaical enquiries about the health of my family, observed that Salnikov (a fine mechanic) had come to work drunk and been dismissed from his bench.

I found Salnikov sitting dejected in the corridor. He complained to me that there was some mistake. There was certainly no trace of alcohol in his breath. He declared that he had drunk one bottle of beer the previous evening. In any case, the man had no money for drink.

It was a tragic situation: Salnikov's livelihood was at stake, and obviously he was being victimised by Gushchin. Salnikov was a non-Party man, but his fingers were golden. He had constructed our finest testing instruments. His nominal wages were 750 roubles a month, actual takings 450. Part of this went to his first wife and the two children he had had by her. He also had two children by his second wife. He was the embodiment of poverty and the soul of honour. I pronounced him sober and sent him back to work.

The following day, alas, Salnikov was *thirteen minutes late*. The instructions were that a chief who did not remove from work and hand over to a court a delinquent within two hours of the offence was himself considered an accessory. Both Gushchin and Konchin took note of Salnikov's lateness, but failed—deliberately, of course—to report it to me until later. Meanwhile Salnikov was left at work. Then Gushchin reported the matter to me, while Konchin reported to Illarionov my alleged covering-up of Salnikov.

I sent for the poor fellow. He was like a cornered animal. He offered to put in as many additional *hours* of work as we chose to enforce to make up for the lost thirteen minutes.

'The man is lying!' cried Gushchin. 'He was twenty-one minutes late, not thirteen.' Konchin and Gushchin both alleged the same. What was I to do? Hand Salnikov over to a court and satisfy the commissars and *blatniks*? Or stand up for Salnikov, whom I knew to be an honest man—and so lay myself open to the charge of concealing a crime? It was not merely Salnikov's word against that of three commissars. The timing-clerk, a girl called Burtzev, and a number of ordinary workers independently gave the same figure as Salnikov—thirteen minutes—and I had no doubt whatsoever who was right.

I sent Salnikov back to work, subject to stern reprimand for having been thirteen minutes late, and I issued an official warning to Gushchin and Konchin that the substitution of invention for fact could not be countenanced.

Half an hour later, my telephone rang. It was Illarionov who already had a copy of my statement. I have already referred to the stupidity and cowardice of Illarionov. To such a man Gushchin and Konchin were almost infallible, but any ordinary worker was easy commissar's prey, and he was the Commissar of the faculty. Rychagov headed the Air Forces, Ovchinkin, the political administration of the Air Forces, while Smokachov was Academy Commissar. Pomerantzev was no longer head of the Academy; Andreyev, the OC's deputy on the scientific and teaching side, was at the preliminary stage of disfavour before being charged with 'political myopia' and sent into exile. The new OC of the Academy, Lt.-General of Aviation Sokolov-Sokolionok, had not yet found his feet and made no decisions of his own. There was no strong man in charge and a kind of anarchy existed. So in front of me Illarionov dictated to my secretary an order (in fact, illegally), dismissing Salnikov and handing him over for trial.

The institution hummed like an angry bee-hive, but now *not one* man uttered a word of protest. They all looked on and submitted to orders. This is what communism fosters.

I can express my reaction to it in only one way: *I do not wish to be a communist*. How could I have believed in my youth in the *narodnost*, the oneness with the people, of these counter-revolutionary bullies? The essential despotism of their nature had so long been clearly visible.

Illarionov set up a commission to investigate my alleged sabotage of the law. At a special sitting, I was expelled from the Laboratory Party Bureau; and two days later, from the Central Party Bureau. Once more, the wheels had begun to turn.

Illarionov prepared the indictment of Salnikov; Trade Union Committee chairman Gushchin made a derogatory statement about him and 'in the name of the working class' called for a severe sentence. My opinion was not asked. Salnikov was found guilty of being twenty-one minutes late, sentenced to six months' forced labour and half his wages was docked.

I asked for permission to speak and said: 'As the leaders of Party and Government have frequently pointed out, a Soviet court should primarily be a school for the education of the masses, not an instrument of punishment. Further, Comrade Stalin calls on us to remember that of all resources the most valuable is our human material, which should be protected against unmerited injury. One

of such cadres is my subordinate Salnikov whose case is better known to me than to anyone else here, since I am his chief and have seen all his work. I have known him a long time as an honourable and industrious worker, and a patriot. He is meticulous in his work. Hence it is my civil and Party duty to declare that his sentence constitutes a grave error, based on false information. Once again I declare that Comrade Salnikov was only thirteen minutes late. I declare that I informed the chairman of the court of this in good time and in writing, and therefore retain the right to enter an appeal to higher organs of justice against the decision of the court.'

At a meeting the next day Salnikov's colleagues approved the sentence. Kurochkin, a non-Party engineer, went so far as to say that Salnikov should have been shot. When I denounced this as savagery, Kurochkin retorted that he was not interested in the observations of the 'former head of the laboratory'. (I was of course still formally *Nachalnik*.) Buzinov, chairman of the Trade Union Committee, distinguished himself by a long speech enumerating Salnikov's crimes and praising Gushchin. Buzinov had hitherto seemed to be a good friend. I summoned him to my office after the trial and asked him if he really believed in Salnikov's guilt. 'No,' he replied, 'but it was a useful case.' A fulcrum for intensifying labour discipline.

I have preserved fairly complete documents relating to my next head-on collision, and feel that they may be of some interest.

(1) *To:* The Prosecutor of the Supreme Administration of the Air Forces of the U.S.S.R. *Copy to:* Political Deputy OC of the Air Forces.

I hereby report that the *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Laboratory of the Military Aviation Zhukovsky Academy, Military Engineer of the Third Rank, G. A. Tokaev has permitted infringement of the Law of Labour Discipline, in that instead of immediately suspending and handing to a court worker Salnikov who came to work twenty-one minutes late, he confined himself to the administrative sanction of 'stern reprimand'.

In view of this, Military Engineer of the Third Rank G. A. Tokaev has been suspended and the question of handing him over to the courts in pursuance of the law is being considered. The relative documents are appended.

(signed) *Nachalnik* of the Academy Major-General of
Aviation Sokolov-Sokolionok
Acting Deputy for Political Matters Brigade
Commissar Priyetzhev.

(2) *To: The Nachalnik of the Academy.*

In answer to your communication concerning the case of Military Engineer of the Third Rank G. A. Tokaev, I bring to your notice the following resolution of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defence Army Commissar Comrade Shchadenko: for lack of sufficient grounds, cancel the handing over of Comrade Tokaev to the courts, limit his sentence to suspension and Party sanctions.

(signed) Shchadenko, Prosecutor of the Supreme Administration of the Military Air Forces of the U.S.S.R.

(3) *To: Comrade Priyezzhev, Brigade Commissar and Deputy Nachalnik of the Zhukovsky Academy for Political Matters.*

Examination of the documents concerning the case of Comrade Tokaev show that Party-Political work in the Academy is lame in both legs. How could it come about that a member of the Party Bureau and the *Nachalnik* of a large sub-department, Comrade Tokaev, should take it into his head to defend a 'worker' against the laws of the Soviet régime? How is it conceivable that members of the Party active should set up a worker against the workers' Government, the Soviet Trade Unions, the policy of our Party?

The explanation is to be found in a deficiency of political-educational work in the Academy. I suggest you take the most urgent and decisive steps to make good these deficiencies at all speed. It is indispensable to organise a course of lectures and examinations among the professorial and lecturing staff of the Academy concerning the mutual relations of the Trade Unions and the Party and Government. It is essential to explain thoroughly to the masses that it is unseemly to 'defend' the rights of workers in a workers' and peasants' socialist state.

(signed) Divisional Commissar Deputy Commander of the Military Air Forces of the U.S.S.R.

(4)

ORDER

TO THE MILITARY AVIATION ENGINEERING ACADEMY OF THE NAME OF ZHUKOVSKY

1. The essential characteristic of our Soviet Socialist State is that there is no longer any private property of the instruments or means of production, that the exploiting classes are destroyed, that the exploitation of man by man is ended. Our socialist laws are created by the workers themselves and are aimed at the defence of the interests of the workers. In the Party and Government there is not nor can be any higher aim than care for the workers.

Unfortunately, not all our leading workers have yet fully grasped this, in consequence of which there are sometimes in our practical work intolerable infringements of the Soviet laws. An outstanding example in this respect is the criminally liberal attitude of the *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Laboratory, Comrade Tokaev, to an infringer of labour discipline, named Salnikov.

2. The criminally liberal conduct of Comrade Tokaev took the form that instead of suspending Salnikov from work and handing him to the courts, he confined himself to the imposition of an official 'stern reprimand' to Salnikov, who had come to work twenty-one minutes late. Further, Comrade Tokaev attempted to 'defend' Salnikov and prevent his trial. To this end he issued an order declaring that Salnikov was only thirteen minutes late.

3. The People's Court of the Leningrad Ward of Moscow has sentenced Salnikov to six months' forced labour with retention of 50% of his pay by the State. The place of punishment is to be indicated by the Aerodynamical Laboratory.

4. For criminally liberal attitude to an infringer of labour discipline and for harmful attempts to prevent the handing over of Salnikov to a court, I order:

A. Comrade Tokaev is to be removed from the post of *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Laboratory.

B. Comrade Tokaev is to be given a stern reprimand with the warning that if there is a repetition of such infringements, harsher measures will be applied to him, to the extent of handing him over to the courts.

C. The head of the Cadres Department is to pass to me for confirmation suggestions concerning the further service of Comrade Tokaev, and concerning a new *Nachalnik* of the Laboratory.

D. For the purpose of intensifying active leadership, the Aerodynamical Laboratory is to be made immediately subordinate to the Head of the Engineering Faculty of the Academy.

(signed) Sokolov-Sokolionok, Major-General of Aviation,
Nachalnik of the Zhukovsky Academy and

(signed) Priyezzhev, Brigade Commissar, Deputy *Nachalnik*
of the Zhukovsky Academy for Political Matters.

(5)

ORDER

TO THE ENGINEERING FACULTY OF THE ZHUKOVSKY MILITARY
AVIATION ENGINEERING ACADEMY

1. The order of the former *Nachalnik* of the Aerodynamical Academy, Comrade Tokaev, is to be quashed, as irregular and an infringement of the Laws of Labour Discipline.

2. By an Academy Order Comrade Tokaev has been suspended for not taking steps for the immediate suspension and handing to the courts of a drunkard, Salnikov, and also for harmful attempts to 'defend' this man against a Soviet Socialist Trade Union.
3. By an Academy Order Comrade Tokaev has been given a stern reprimand with warning.
4. Military Engineer of the First Rank P. M. Golovinov is appointed *Nachalnik* of the Laboratory.

(signed) Ponomarev, Head of the Engineering Faculty, Brigade Engineer.

(signed) Illarionov, Commissar of the Faculty, Regimental Commissar.

(6) PROPOSAL FOR THE FURTHER UTILISATION OF COMRADE TOKAEV

The Cadres Department recommends the expunction of Comrade Tokaev's name from the lists of the permanent staff of the Academy and that he should be put at the disposition of the Administration of Cadres of the Air Forces. Attached: Comrade Tokaev's personal dossier.

(signed) Reshetnikov, Lt.-Colonel *Nachalnik* of the Cadres Department.

(7) SERVICE MINUTE OF THE DEPUTY NACHALNIK OF THE ACADEMY FOR SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL WORK—to the *Nachalnik* of the Administration of Cadres of the Air Forces of the U.S.S.R.

In answer to your enquiry I inform you that the question of the further service of Comrade Tokaev has been examined at a sitting of the Learned Council of the Academy. The decision was unanimous to take steps with the Administration of Cadres of the Air Forces for Comrade Tokaev to be left in the Academy as a valued scientific worker, of great promise, and in the name of the Learned Council I request you to do so.

(signed) Andreyev, Divisional Engineer, Deputy *Nachalnik* of the Academy for Scientific and Educational Work.

(8) To: The *Nachalnik* of the Red Banner Scientific-Research Institute of the Air Forces, Lt.-General of Aviation Filin.

For pursuance of further service and utilisation as senior scientific

worker, Military Engineer of the Third Rank Comrade G. A. Tokaev is sent to you for disposition. Attached: personal dossier.

(signed) Orekhov, Lt.-General of Aviation,
Nachalnik of the Administration of
Cadres of the Air Forces of the U.S.S.R.

(9) *To:* The *Nachalnik* of the Administration of Cadres of the Air Forces of the U.S.S.R., Lt.-General of Aviation Comrade Orekhov.

I categorically protest against the transfer of Comrade Tokaev from the Academy to the Scientific-Research Institute of the Air Forces. During his work as *Nachalnik* of the laboratory, Comrade Tokaev completely transformed the organisation of that institution, bringing the research activity of the aerodynamical tunnels and other equipment to the accuracy of fine mechanism, taking a personal part in the planning and creation of laboratories of supersonic speeds, carrying through a considerable number of exceptionally important theoretical and experimental works on aerodynamics and gasodynamics, publishing a number of works, personally giving leadership to an urgent Government assignment. Apart from this, we consider Comrade Tokaev a brilliant lecturer and organiser. The Academy has great need of him.

(signed) Yuriev, *Nachalnik* of Aircraft Cycle, Meritorious Figure of Science and Technology, Doctor of Technological Sciences, Professor, Brigade Engineer.

(signed) Zemsky, *Nachalnik* of the Chair of Theoretical Aerodynamics, Professor, Doctor of Technological Sciences, Brigade Engineer.

(signed) Golubyev, *Nachalnik* of the Chair of Higher Mathematics, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Professor and Brigade Engineer.

(10) *To:* The *Nachalnik* of the Air Forces Zhukovsky Academy.

I order: cancellation of the transfer of Military Engineer of the Third Rank Comrade Tokaev from the Academy to the Scientific Research Institute of the Air Forces. Comrade Tokaev is to be utilised as scientific worker in the Academy.

(signed) Rychagov, Lt.-General of Aviation Officer
Commanding, Soviet Air Forces.



Chief Air Marshal Novikov



Marshal Zhukov

(11) *To:* The Principal Engineer of the Air Forces of the U.S.S.R.

Copy to: *Nachalnik* of the Zhukovsky Air Forces Academy.

The Central Aerodynamical Institute is experiencing an acute shortage of qualified scientific assistants with experience of work in aerodynamical laboratories. I therefore make application for the direction of Military Engineer Comrade Tokaev to be at the disposition of the Administration of Cadres of the People's Commissariat of Aviation Industry for his utilisation in TzAGI.

(signed) Polikovski, Brigade Engineer, Deputy
Nachalnik of TzAGI.

(12)

ORDER

TO THE ZHUKOVSKY AIR FORCES ACADEMY

1. Cancel my deposition concerning direction of Comrade Tokaev to the Administration of Cadres of the Air Forces of the U.S.S.R. for appointment to a new duty.
2. Appoint Comrade Tokaev Deputy *Nachalnik* of the Scientific Research Department of the Zhukovsky Air Forces Engineering Academy.

(signed) Sokolov-Sokolionok, Major-General of Aviation,
Nachalnik of the Academy.

THIRTEEN MINUTES

BY CHANCE, the man appointed at the head of the political enquiry commission was an old friend, one Major-Engineer Pavlenko, a North Caucasian of Ukrainian-Cossack descent. He was a member of the Central Party Bureau, and *Nachalnik* of the laboratory of technical exploitation of aircraft. The other two members were Colonel-Engineer Andrianov (also, incidentally, a Southerner) and one Captain-Engineer Plaksin. We had all three been in the Academy throughout those stormy thirties and considered ourselves a sort of old guard. Pavlenko and Andrianov were proud too that a fellow-countryman of theirs should have been so rapidly distinguished in our science as I had been.

So there we were, closeted together. Pavlenko opened by saying that he proposed to skip questions of a personal nature, as all three knew me so well. He thought the principal question was whether I had or had not deviated from the general Party line. If I had, questions of detail would follow; if not, the matter was settled.

The enquiry thus—in normal Soviet fashion—was to assume a quasi-scientific character, as if its subject were not human actions, but an immutable chemical formula.

When the other two had agreed with Pavlenko, it was my turn. I disagreed. I said I would answer their questions but considered the whole matter irregular, since I was convinced that I had acted properly.

Plaksin: 'Did you then consider the orders of our Commanding Officer wrong?'

'No, in his place I would have done the same; he signed decisions made by his staff and based on information submitted—but that information was false.'

So I insisted, did I, that Salnikov was only thirteen minutes late? But Gushchin and Konchin said twenty-one minutes. I replied that I considered them and Smurov to be *provocateurs*.

Plaksin: 'But they are all three Party members.'

Tokaev: 'Even Party members can be *provocateurs*.'

Plaksin: 'I advise you to be more circumspect in your expressions.'

Tokaev: 'Better give that advice to the *provocateurs*.'

Here Pavlenko intervened, saying that it was as clear as daylight that at least Konchin was a rogue. But Plaksin insisted that as a Party member, Konchin could not be called a rogue.

Andrianov: 'I have never trusted Konchin; he is a *blatnik*.'

Plaksin: 'Comrades, we cannot speak thus of a Party member.'

Andrianov: 'Tokaev too is a Party member.'

Pavlenko: 'Precisely. But let's get on with it: Comrade Tokaev, in what do you see your error?'

Tokaev: 'In not getting Konchin tried in good time and not getting Gushchin and Smurov expelled from the Laboratory. Also in not having ever learned to lie.'

Round and round the argument went, in true Stalinist logic, wherein a constant is the infallibility of the Stalinist prosecution. For, as Plaksin said, there was no discussing whether Salnikov was twenty-one minutes late or not, that was established for all time by the Orders. But I cited time-keeper Burtzev and the word of honour of a number of workers.

Plaksin: 'An individual worker's word of honour cannot be accepted as evidence.'

Tokaev: 'Precisely where we part company. I have believed and still believe that the word of honour of a worker is more valid than the hypocritical words of *blatniks*.' I continued: 'Further, I protest, Comrade Plaksin, against your statement. If we have a workers' and peasants' government, if our revolutionary theories are based on the leading rôle of the working class, if the Soviet régime is the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, we have no right not to have confidence in the working class. That is an idiotic disease from which the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries suffered. They paid dearly for it.'

Pavlenko and Andrianov backed me up; Plaksin side-stepped: we should trust the working class, but in this enquiry we had to rely on documents. I replied that my approach was the opposite: the human being came first. It was the height of amorality and savagery to substitute twenty-one minutes for thirteen, just to bring Salnikov's act within the competence of a court of law.

Plaksin leapt: this must be entered in the minutes—for my words were criticism of the Party. The others thought this unnecessary. Plaksin requested his separate view to be recorded, and by the rules of such Commissions this had to be done. From that point on, Plaksin took every possible opportunity of attacking me and having his opinion recorded. It was not till the matter reached a much higher level that I succeeded in having Plaksin's many charges cancelled. But a great deal was to take place before that point was reached.

Pravda refers at length to the uniformity of the Party in all its branches, but that of course is nonsense. In the provinces nobody would ever think of making Salnikov's eight additional minutes of lateness the hook on which to hang discussions on Party theory. Ironically enough, only in a branch with 'clever' men could such a thing take place. This was only logical, for the finer the brains, the greater the orthodoxy with which they should operate. Hence every trifle was liable to become a matter of principle.

At our second session, Pavlenko again proposed not to waste time on trifles. But a fierce wrangle now developed over the basic question. In what had Tokaev deviated? Each of them wanted to produce his own theory. Plaksin in particular wanted to lecture us all. Plaksin suffered from the commonest complaint of the Party member appointed to such a Commission: being newly entrusted with cross-examination he must prove himself a better Party man than the man he was questioning; therefore he must teach him.

Nevertheless, the discussion did serve to bring out my views at the time (January, 1941)—or should I rather say, the basic ideals underlying the way in which I dealt with Party dogma. My argument was that the ultimate aim of Party and Comintern was first socialism, and beyond that, communism, a classless society in which every man worked according to his abilities and received according to his needs, where there was no form of exploitation and all men were equal—in short, the movement from capitalism to communism. At each intermediate stage we should have the ultimate aim constantly in mind; this ultimate aim furnishing an incomparable prime mover of hope, marked the supremacy of the communist party over all other parties. I maintained that I had always served this aim, since I had always supported the replacement of social and national injustice by brotherly and equal relations between men.

They agreed that my basic views were sound, but suggested that in practice my methods were wrong. I must surely know that, said Plaksin, since I had often been in trouble for deviating. Indeed, Pavlenko said, it must be admitted that the Party did require a *Nachalnik* to hand over for trial any man coming more than twenty minutes late. And back we were again at the initial question of factual truth. Thirteen minutes late or twenty-one? Now Plaksin picked on the question of Salnikov's alleged drunkenness: the rules required me to call a doctor *at once*; I had done so only after forty minutes; what about that?

Useless to argue that Salnikov obviously had not been drunk. Therefore on this lesser point I ate humble-pie—and this was duly entered in the minutes. The Commission was delighted; a modicum

of self-criticism had been squeezed out of me. If only I would deal with other points as readily, how soon we should be finished! But that was another matter; I could not possibly admit to having departed from the Party line for that would be the end of me. We were on the eve of war, and it was essential for me to cling to my Party ticket. Therefore I dug in my heels, and on and on it went. Three main questions were examined—this of the general Party line, then whether it was right or not to stick up for a worker, and finally my alleged scorn for the Trade Union.

At last a sufficiently fat file was assembled and passed on to be considered at a sitting of the Central Party Bureau. This consisted of nine Bureau members (including myself), Pavlenko, Andrianov, Plaksin, Illarionov and a girl named Akimov as secretary. The Chairman, Makhov, was a man of the same rank as myself, a specialist on aircraft materials. He was also secretary of the General Party Branch of the Faculties.

‘Comrades,’ said Makhov, ‘we all know what exclusive importance Comrade Lenin attached to the inculcation of iron labour discipline. Comrade Stalin tirelessly teaches the Party and the Soviet people that without firm discipline, without swift and decisive slashing of any infringement of the labour laws there is no use expecting successful advance towards communism. Our Party and its Central Committee constantly point out that the very first duty of leading cadres is the inculcation and maintenance of a high degree of organisation and culture of labour.’

This is the opening gambit of all Soviet speeches.

‘All this is well known to Comrade Tokaev. But latterly in his work there have been serious deviations from the general line of our Party. Officers have been heard addressing him, not by rank, but by name and patronymic! He has even on occasion invited workers to his room and discusses things with them just as if he were not their *Nachalnik*. Particularly outrageous is the fact that Comrade Tokaev, a *Nachalnik*, has permitted himself to play chess with a worker named Pleshakov . . .’

At last, however, he reached Salnikov, only once again to side-step in his argumentation, using many words to remind Comrade Tokaev how foolish it was to protect a worker against the Soviet laws, since in the U.S.S.R. socialism was an accomplished fact, *ergo* the worker was already protected.

After this the fireworks began: how could this great delinquency of Tokaev’s have come about? (100 words). The Salnikov case was an excellent text for lessons in labour discipline (120 words). We all knew Tokaev’s merits as a scientist—there was already an order

that he was to remain in the Academy (50 words). The matter had been discussed with Comrade Illarionov, and there was no question but that Comrade Tokaev must leave the Party Central Bureau. He must also offer self-criticism at a Party assembly. His views on the Party line as a whole were sound, but required much more precision.

Altogether, to make so simple an announcement, part of which was already known, Makhov spoke eloquently for more than a quarter of an hour. This sitting was followed by the full Party Assembly of several hundred Party members and candidates, as well as many non-Party scholars and workers who were directly concerned. It was an interesting meeting—not a mere mob of fanatics, as it would have been under Yezhov, but an enlightened gathering of the Soviet scientific intelligentsia.

The chair was taken by Colonel-Engineer Gartzev. He called on Makhov to speak, and Makhov repeated his turn almost word for word, adding the decisions of the Central and the Academy Command, then calling on me to speak in self-criticism and give a political qualification of my errors.

I spoke, I think, for half an hour. Any McCarthy reading a report of it would, I am sure, at once label me *communist*. It was, in fact, a thoroughly Soviet speech. How could it be otherwise? First came a declaration that in the U.S.S.R. the creative initiative of the masses had reached heights unheard of in history, and was well on the way to the complete triumph of socialism under the high-held banner of Lenin and Stalin. We had no capitalists. Hence everything went to the workers. Therefore I sharply condemned any who infringed labour discipline. Here I was at one with the Party general line. Immediately the labour laws were published I had taken the necessary steps for their enforcement.

However, this was only one side of the medal: labour discipline should not mean one-sided over-simplified application of disciplinary measures for petty infringements. There was nothing simpler than to hand a man over to the courts, but it was more reasonable to discuss the causes of infringements and insist on preventing them in future. If we were constructing a new world, it was our duty to reject crass methods. In the October Revolution the proletariat was the vanguard, and we must be more sensitive in our approach to the workers. Only a human attitude towards men could consolidate the moral-political unity of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.

Therefore I considered that the immediate dismissal of Salnikov was not merely useless, it was detrimental to the cause. A more

subtle approach would have far more effect on such a man. My aim was to strengthen the mutual relationship between the working class and the Party general line. If this was a crime, I confessed to being a criminal. For when we spoke of discipline in our institutions, we should remember the wise words of Comrade Lenin:

‘In place of the old regimentation, applied in bourgeois society against the will of the majority, we put the conscious discipline of workers and peasants, who are one in their hatred of the old order and unite determination, skill and readiness to bring together and organise all their forces for this struggle, so that from the will of millions and hundreds of millions, fragmented, broken up and scattered throughout this huge land, we may create a single will, for without such a single will we shall inevitably be broken. Without consolidation, without the conscious discipline of the workers and peasants, our cause is hopeless.’

Thus spoke our great leader in 1920. Who, I challenged them, would dare to question his rightness? Smurov complained of my liberalism, but had he not all too quickly forgotten Stalin’s words that the individual was our greatest capital? Were we not forgetting the Central Committee’s directive that we must ‘decisively and mercilessly liquidate bureaucratic methods of leadership’?

In other words, education, not repression; persuasion, not compulsion, would be our watchwords, and I did not admit myself guilty.

Smurov (interrupting): ‘Your guilt is already fixed once and for all in a number of orders and decisions of the Central Bureau. You are very experienced in deceiving the Party.’

Gartzev: ‘Comrade Smurov, I have not called on you to speak. Comrade Tokaev has full right to give the Party Branch his views.’

Smurov: ‘Comrade Tokaev is trying to convince the assembly that Salnikov was only thirteen minutes late.’

Tokaev: ‘Comrade Smurov, I have not yet come to that, but if I may jump ahead I will say: yes, I do assert that Salnikov was only thirteen minutes late, twenty-one minutes’ lateness have been ascribed to him by the efforts of yourself and Konchin.’

Smurov: ‘The Party will compel you to admit that Salnikov was twenty-one minutes late.’

Tokaev: ‘The Party does not call on its members to be hypocrites, and will never compel me to lie to it. I have never been one to trade my conscience away.’

Smurov (shouting): ‘Comrade Chairman, I request the entry of Tokaev’s provocative declaration in the minutes. What are we

to understand by his words, that he has never been one to trade his conscience? Does he not mean to insinuate that I do?’

Tokaev: ‘Quite right, Comrade Smurov, you do trade your conscience, though not for hard cash, but for the puffed-up reputation of a demagogue.’

Gartzev: ‘Comrade Smurov, in the name of the Presidium of this Assembly I call you to order and suggest that when you use other people’s names you should prefix the word “comrade”. And you, Comrade Tokaev, in the name of the Presidium I warn you that if you continue to use excessive language you will be deprived of the right to speak. Go on with your statement.’

I tried to do so. I was, I said, also accused of a wrong interpretation of the work of the Trade Unions. But before I could continue, Ponomariov interjected: ‘And rightly accused. Your view of the rôle of the Trade Unions in our country is wrong.’

‘I have always thought,’ I said, ‘that Comrade Ponomariov was a specialist in political casuistry.’

Ponomariov (rising and shouting): ‘You deal in casuistry, not I, Comrade Tokaev! You’ve an agile tongue, but I don’t believe you are politically sound at heart.’

Tokaev: ‘Comrade Ponomariov, as the Assembly sees, has now acquired another profession: the ability to read into people’s hearts. I thought we no longer had mystics or witch-doctors among us.’

Ponomariov (again rising): ‘Comrade Chairman, I protest . . .’

Gartzev: ‘Comrade Tokaev, I must call you to order once again. The Assembly is examining your case, not that of Comrade Ponomariov.’

Tokaev: ‘Comrades, I apologise. Well, to continue, I have been charged with wrong interpretation of the rôle of the Trade Unions in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat.’

Buzinov: ‘You treat the Trade Unions with contumely, Comrade Tokaev.’

Tokaev: ‘You should prove that I treated you with contumely as Chairman of the Trade Union Committee.’

Plaksin: ‘You did call Comrade Buzinov a Trade Union bureaucrat.’

Tokaev: ‘There is nothing criminal in that. The Party requires us to call bureaucrats—bureaucrats.’

I continued to explain that Buzinov should have found out more about Salnikov and what Salnikov had done before condemning the man. Against Buzinov’s interruptions I strove to defeat them with their own theories, for the Party had indeed—in words

—condemned as Trotskyist the attempt to merge the Trade Unions in the Party. In trying to turn the unions into government instruments, they were renewing Trotskyism—and I quoted the *Short Course of the History of the Party* against them: ‘The Trotskyists by their policy were tending to rouse the non-Party masses of the workers against the Party’ (p. 241, Russian edition.)

Now Plaksin intervened again, with the complaint that I was carrying on Right-wing deviationist propaganda.

Buzinov: ‘He is saying the very same things that enemy-of-the-people Tomsy said. Comrade Chairman, we are not going to put up with this!’

Gartzev: ‘Comrades, I ask you to be more temperate in your language.’

Tokaev: ‘The Party has called on me to outline my views, and I am doing so. Enemy-of-the-people Tomsy and the Right-wing deviation have nothing to do with it. But since Comrades Plaksin and Buzinov regard this as Right-wing deviation, I shall remind them of the words of the great Lenin:

“The trade unions of a socialist country are the organisations of the ruling, dominant, governmental class, the class which is effecting the compulsion of the state. But this is not a state organisation, it is not an organisation of compulsion, it is an educational organisation, an organisation of persuasion and teaching, a school of management and administration.”

This, interrupted Ponomarev, was not my opinion but Lenin’s. Here Pavlenko took my part, insisting that I had surely the right to adopt Comrade Lenin’s standpoint, and the Chairman asked me if this was not the case. I of course confirmed that it was, and I went on to drive my points home: that Comrade Buzinov should carry out Party directives, that the dictatorship of the proletariat was a complex system, built on Soviets, Party, Unions and Comsomol, each of which bodies had its part to play. We were not a perfect society. There had been the excessive harshness of Yezhov’s rule, but the Party had corrected that. The excessive harshness of Trade Unions must also be rooted out.

The argument thickened. Then Smurov brought it back to the missing eight minutes. He accused me of lying to the Party. I threatened to sue him; Smurov shouted that I should be silenced. Pavlenko coldly reminded him that I had every right to sue him if I wished and then Colonel-Engineer Sitov attacked Pavlenko for trying to shield ‘his pet’.

Here Colonel-Engineer Ivanov stepped in and elicited by formal questions which I was bound to answer, that the People’s Commissar

of Defence had decorated me for my faultless service and leadership of the laboratory.¹ Everybody knew the decoration was deserved, said Ivanov. So if it was one man's word against another's—whose did the Assembly prefer, Tokaev's or Smurov's? Andrianov supported him: the Academy had once had three leading young scientists, Tokaev, Antipov and Gureyev. Gureyev was already out of favour, Antipov under arrest and now Tokaev was being smeared. He suggested ending the farce and letting Tokaev get on with his work. But Konchin had the face to object: Tokaev, he said, had introduced dangerous fraternisation between the workers, the staff and the *Nachalnik*, and he should be exposed. Whereupon a worker named Seleznirov (a Party member) asked Konchin what he had against 'our *Nachalnik*'—was it not that Comrade Tokaev had refused to back his dealings in *blat*? Konchin retorted that everyone knew Seleznirov was one of my toadies.

Worker Artamonov (Party member): 'That's a lie, Konchin! Seleznirov's no toady, and I too ask you what you have against our *Nachalnik* unless it is that he has thrown a bit of daylight on your dirty dealings?'

Here Gartzhev suddenly asked Artamonov what was the attitude of the workers to Tokaev. 'Now that's a question to the point, that is,' said Artamonov. 'And the straight answer is that we are all fond of him and don't want to lose him.' A third man, Teviashev, joined them. Konchin claimed that this merely showed my lack of discipline, but Gartzhev asked him if it was true that he had offered me valuable presents and what my response had been. Indignantly, he denied having offered any. But Artamonov was on his feet in an instant, declaring that he had seen the famous radio set with his own eyes. After these revelations had continued for some moments, Ponomariov proposed that the enquiry should be curtailed and I should be expelled from the Party for 'crass infringements of labour discipline and deviation from the Party line'.

The majority voted only for curtailing the cross-examination. Now began the speeches, voicing all the views which had already been expressed, from one extreme to the other. I shall always be grateful for the speech by Academician Yuriev, the most brilliant aerodynamicist of the U.S.S.R., though a non-Party man, and a scientist of high authority.

He said that the Academy needed me as a scholar as well as an excellent teacher and master of method. He praised me for the many activities as scientific writer and lecturer which I managed to

¹ The order *Otlichnik Krasnoi Armii*: Distinguished member of the Red Army.

add to my heavy routine work. Then he said: 'Comrade Stalin recently drew my attention to our need for men with an all-round development, men who could both carry out research work and direct; and I told him I had a young scholar of precisely that kind, Grigori Tokaev, a man possessed of inexhaustible energy, with fine scientific abilities and organising gifts.' He then spoke of my 'errors' as no mere loud-mouthed Party man would have dared to do. The country faced the danger of war, the Air Force was unprepared, and we wasted time pin-pricking valuable men. Who would replace me if I were thrown out—Konchin? Smurov?

He even told them the story of my tiff with Shakurin, People's Commissar of Aircraft Industry, when a task which I had undertaken proved impossible to complete in the given time and Shakurin was afraid of telling Stalin—'What if he should take offence?' 'Grigori Alexandrovich replied: "Science does not know of offence or whims, it only knows of science." "Am I to tell Comrade Stalin that?" asks Shakurin. "Yes," said Grigori Alexandrovich, "tell him precisely that."' (In fact, I do not doubt, Shakurin found some more evasive way of dealing with the matter.) 'That's the kind of man he is,' said Yuriev. 'He means whatever he says and I have no hesitation in believing his version of the Salnikov story. One can rely on men like that.'

Now came the time for the decision. My expulsion from the Party was proposed. Artamonov leapt to his feet, shaking his fist and shouting that if this were done he would insist that he too should be expelled. It was then proposed to remove me from the Party Bureau and to reprimand me—and this was passed by a majority vote.

Finally, the higher authority of the Party decided to apply to me the sanction 'calling attention' to be entered in my personal record, and expulsion from the Central Bureau.

Thus ended the case of the missing eight minutes. Of course, I was never reinstated as Head of the Laboratory. But I was still in the Academy, and was appointed Deputy Chief of the Scientific Research Department, so that Comrades X, Belinsky, Riz and others had good reason to be satisfied.

It was February, 1941, four months before the Soviet-Nazi war. Pursuing the thread of my pre-war scientific career, and with it the changing texture of Soviet life, I have leapt ahead of major political events, and must now return to make the eventual war position of the U.S.S.R. clear.

THE SHAMEFUL EVE OF WAR

THE UNDERGROUND opposition to which I belonged had resumed active work in 1938. This brought me into contact with Beria, not through his work, but mine; contacts inside the Kremlin were essential to us. The outside world seemed to have accepted the myth of Stalin's monolith at its face value. A curious error to be harboured by people who run their own world through committees, to whose decisions they are loyal, but with a loyalty which may not include personal agreement or alternatively the need to resign. Gardinashvili helped me to become a frequent visitor at private parties where I was able to get a fair idea of what the leaders of the oligarchy knew and thought.

Not long before the Second World War began in the West—soon after Mehlis's directives regarding the *Short Course* and indoctrination, in fact—I was the guest at a dinner given by one of the V.I.P.'s whom I will call Animin. We talked about the prospects of war and I asked him (on Comrade X's instructions) whether the Central Committee were convinced that we could survive an armed conflict with Nazi Germany.

Speaking only for himself, he said that this depended on three factors. First, the position of Great Britain in such a war. Secondly, the degree to which the Nazis curbed their brutality in the occupied areas. On this point he was an optimist: he believed that they were incapable of a humane policy and could not successfully play the rôle of 'liberators'; in addition they 'held bad cards' since they were making use of Tsarist and fascist émigrés; he admitted that the Kremlin had given much thought to this matter. The third decisive factor was whether we fought on the Baltic-Black Sea front where we had experience or in the Caucasus, where we had neither war experience nor the certainty that the local population would be loyal. How right he proved to be! In fact the U.S.S.R. was saved by the joint action of the British and Americans which prevented the opening of a Caucasian front. It may be that this indirect strategic aid was even more valuable than all the Lend-Lease.

At another moment the conversation turned to the new ideological directives, and one of the guests, Colonel Ivashchenko, said that

decrees and laws which did not enjoy popular support were neither correct nor expedient. This seemed at once to put Animin on his guard.

'You think so?' he said quickly.

The unobservant Ivashchenko was undaunted. 'Yes,' he cried.

'Then you are wrong,' Animin said calmly, and explained that if the rulers had always had to consult the masses we should never have achieved socialism, because the people did not always know what was good for them, they registered their approval later. He turned to me: 'What do you think?' Then he noticed the frown on my face and asked: 'What's up with you?'

I asked him whether he was speaking as a member of the Central Committee of the Party. He laughed: 'No, old man. You're here as my guest, not at a Party meeting.'

'Very well,' I said. 'I consider Comrade Mehli's report a grave political mistake. Standardised views never do any good.'

'Grigori Alexandrovich,' he said, 'you have one serious failing: you express yourself with the utmost clarity but too crudely. After all, Mehli is the head of the Political Department and you're only his junior officer.'

'I'm more than that, Comrade Animin,' I replied. 'I'm also a Party member and a citizen of the U.S.S.R.'

'That's neither here nor there. What are you trying to prove?'

'My point,' I said, 'is that instead of getting down to military matters the armed forces are frittering away their time studying the *Short Course*.'

Animin did not answer; he poured himself a glass of wine; then, in an aside, he reproved me. I took the hint and held my tongue. A few moments later he tucked his hand under my arm and led me to another room, leaving Ivashchenko and Gardinashvili to play cards with the ladies. The ensuing conversation was so significant that I could never forget it.

'Grisha,' he said, 'do be more discreet, especially in front of other people. I can feel you're at boiling point again. I know what you would like me to do: pass your opinions on to Stalin. Don't expect me to. The fact that I sit high doesn't mean that I can do whatever I want. Did Abu¹ sit any lower? Or Bukharin? Or Tukhachevsky? Do get this into your head once and for all. Stop being the wild rebel. It's no more intolerable for you than for anybody else. They all keep quiet—so must you.' Then he said that someone who was close to us both had told him of my efforts

¹ Abu—Yenukidze.

to shield men who were accused by Kaganovich of being spies and traitors. Why on earth did I have to do that? 'You have a wife and daughter, you must give some thought to that. Your nearest and dearest friends have been jailed, or shot—do you imagine that it could never happen to yourself?'

I heard him out in silence but I was very disturbed. At last I could no longer contain myself. I looked this member of the dictatorship straight in the eyes and asked him if he was convinced that Bukharin had been guilty. He replied quietly that he was not, but that made no difference; Bukharin was dead and no power on earth could bring him back to life.

'You knew,' I mentioned certain details of the accusation, 'that these charges were false?'

'If you insist, yes, I did.'

'Then why on earth did you never protest when your high-powered friends passed the resolution to fasten them on Bukharin?'

He said he had not known of the decision until after it was made. I said that in Tsarist days he had been a revolutionary; were his ideals no longer dear to him? His reply was revealing: why should I think that he had abandoned his convictions?

'Theoretically, no doubt you still hold them,' I said. 'But you sit round the table with people who are betraying the ideals of the Revolution right and left.' He had no reason to fear me, I said, but neither did I fear him, and I went on to say that history would not forgive him for what I called his 'passive rôle of observer of the reactionary excesses which had taken place in the country and in the Party'.

How well I remember his words: 'You may be right. History will tell whether I was right or wrong. But you too would not be forgiven by history if through your indiscretions others were brought to their death.'

I left him in a very thoughtful mood. 'You have a wife and daughter . . .' I was not one to shrink from my moral responsibilities because I was married, and Aza was the last woman in the world to ask me to; but there was no point in behaving foolishly and perhaps Animin's reminder had been timely.

In the Caucasus we say: 'My wife is my crown.' We mean that a man's soul is in his wife's keeping—that is, if the marriage is what it ought to be. I believe ours was—and is. We were comrades in all the delights and tribulations of life. To this harmony between us, our common origin of course had contributed: we were both Ossetians living in Moscow; we were even both engineers; neither physical attraction alone nor only intellectual interests or political

views in common had brought us together, but all these things were part of our happiness.

In the early thirties, Aza, young and lovely, had joined the Moscow Academy of Military Chemical Engineering. Those were the hard days of the spread of political terror and 'mental automatism'. Like all students of military colleges, Aza was overburdened with work. At the same time, sensitive like most Caucasians, she suffered intensely from the contrast between her own privileged position and the bitter poverty of her old friends in civilian schools. After two years of strain she had reached the limits of her endurance. As I think of her then, two lines of Krylov's come to my mind:

'Have pity on yourself, you're like a match-stick
Indifferent to food and drink alike . . .'

That was when I met her, not as a lover but as a fellow-countryman, sharing her problems and her indignation. Then we grew into one another. Today we are proud that our life's happiness was not built on sentimentality. I cannot remember the exact moment when we declared our love.

We were—and are—eminently happy together. The ideals we shared gave us a stable foundation. Aza's father, Zauerbek Bayev, had been a great fighter for the freedom of his homeland. Her cousin, Chermen Bayev, had been a well-known leader of Caucasian revolutionary democrats in 1917–21; he was executed by White Guardists. Aza and I spoke our native tongue and held to our thousand-year-old traditions of behaviour while also adopting the language and traditions of the Russian people. However much we were exhorted to subscribe to or even compelled outwardly to conform to the new morality, we still remained ourselves. This was of enormous importance in the Soviet world; I shudder to think what would have become of us if one of us had come to think in Soviet terms while the other remained a Caucasian.

The only conceivable source of disagreement between us in those days was my absorption in my work and studies: we were young and in love, and sometimes her feminine soul revolted against the masculine sacrifice of personal life for a political ideal. If I scolded her for this, she answered simply: 'You are my husband, and for one whole evening with you I would cheerfully give the whole U.S.S.R.' In these words Aza revealed a certain irreducible factor in human relations, with which all societies have to reckon.

But it in no way interfered with her limitless honour and loyalty.

The night I came back to Moscow from Gurzuf, Aza, though she did not know the exact reason why I had been summoned, had put two and two together; she asked me whether I expected war to break out soon. My eyes fell on my little daughter's cot and I wondered what was to come. We two had endured a terrible childhood in one war: would our child experience the horrors of another?

Aza asked me what I thought would happen if Hitler set himself up as a liberator of the enslaved peoples of the Soviet Union. I replied that *Mein Kampf* made it abundantly clear that his aim was to colonise the Ukraine and the Caucasus.

'And if he succeeds?'

'I would go on fighting as a partisan.'

'And if they caught you?'

The answer was obvious, I should be shot or hanged.

'But supposing they offered you your life if you would join them?'

'I should prefer death.'

'And the death of your wife and daughter?'

It was a hard question, but we were facing realities. I replied that it was better that they should die than that I should become a Nazi. By her silence Aza told me that my answer was what she had hoped for.

Not so long after this, war descended upon us and Aza was unflinching throughout; there is no stain on her patriotism. After the defeat of Nazism we were confronted with the fury and aggressiveness of Soviet imperialism, and at last with the choice of staying or escaping to the West. Aza was still unhesitatingly with me as, to my immense gratitude, she is today.

I mention these personal matters to help throw light on the terrible eve-of-war dilemma facing all those who were not one hundred per cent behind Stalin: the temptation, warring with patriotism, to see in alien armies the chance of internal liberation. Yet, when we were confronted with the choice, the answer was clear: there was no salvation for us in such dubious opportunism as enlisting Nazi aid.

On the other hand, this did not mean that we had to give up active opposition to Stalin; on the contrary, we were increasing our activity. Tension on both sides was mounting.

In January, 1939, the Supreme Soviet passed a decree establishing the text of a new military oath of allegiance and prescribing the elaborate ceremonial with which it was to be administered. We had already been given directives on preparing the ground for this

measure and lectured on its significance in view of the expected final struggle with capitalism. The text of the oath was as follows:

'I, a citizen of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, joining the ranks of the Soviet Army, accept the oath and solemnly swear to be an honourable, brave, disciplined, vigilant soldier, rigorously to preserve military and state secrecy, unconditionally to carry out all military statutes and orders of commanding officers, commissars and *Nachalniks*.

'I swear to study conscientiously the military art, in all ways to cherish military and national property and to my last breath to be faithful to my nation,¹ to my Soviet homeland and to the Workers' and Peasants' Government.

'I am always ready on the orders of the Workers' and Peasants' Government to go forth in defence of my homeland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and as a soldier of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, I swear to defend this courageously, with all my strength, with dignity and honour, not sparing my blood or my very life for the attainment of complete victory over our enemies.

'If, however, by evil intent I infringe this oath taken solemnly by me, may the stern punishment of the Soviet laws, universal detestation and the scorn of the workers be my lot.'

Up to 1936 there had been no oath, only a solemn promise made collectively by a regiment. The individual oath had been abolished by the Revolution on the grounds that a man should be free to choose his allegiance. Now that the U.S.S.R. was supposed to be the land of workers' and peasants' socialism, it might have been thought that an oath was less requisite than ever! Yet not only was the oath imposed, but its text clearly implied that the U.S.S.R. was no longer a union of free republics, each representing a 'homeland' for its people, but a collective 'nation', a collective 'homeland' which disregarded the constituent nationalities altogether.

For these reasons, we revolutionary democrats resented the oath as a counter-revolutionary instrument of Stalinism. Of course I both took it and administered it; we all did; not to do so was unthinkable. The most we could do was to carry on an underground campaign to ensure, if possible, that the men understood what was being imposed on them.

¹ Nation. The Russian word *narod* (people or nation) creates an ambiguity in this context as it suggests a single 'Soviet nation' rather than a confederation. It thus assumes what does not exist.—*Translator*.

We had a further difficulty. The undertaking to preserve State secrets touched us on a raw place. Though none of us would think of making revelations damaging to the country, we knew very well that there were secret Kremlin plans (e.g. for imperialist expansion in the Balkans and elsewhere), plans which in our view endangered the country, and we could accept no inward moral obligation not to reveal them.

In April we held a congress of underground oppositionist leaders to review the position at home and abroad. Apart from revolutionary democrats there were present two socialists and two Right-wing military oppositionists, one of whom called himself a popular democrat-decentralist. The meeting was conducted by Belinsky, behind whom was Comrade X. We passed a resolution for the first time defining Stalinism as counter-revolutionary *fascism*, a fascist betrayal of the working class. I wonder if the reader can understand the gravity of this charge, the heart-searching or the hatred which decided us to make it.

The resolution was immediately communicated to prominent personalities of both Party and Government and similar conferences were organised in other centres. Belinsky went to the Urals, one of the socialists to the Don Basin, Yeryomenko and Okman to other industrial centres. It is still dangerous to mention certain other names. I was sent to Leningrad because, although I had worked mostly in the South, and although I had become a Moscovite, I had, ever since my student days, kept close ties with our Leningrad comrades. I was particularly active in Leningrad in 1939 and '40. I never travelled there without good official reason, but equally never without making good use of the opportunities which my official position afforded me.

Our purpose this time was not only to hold discussions. We had moved a decisive step further: we went to assess the chances of an armed uprising against Stalin in the immediate future. So much for the Stalinist oath of loyalty. As a fascist head of the Soviet State, Stalin had forfeited his right to our loyalty.

I stayed in the Red Army hotel in the Leningrad military district, and for the first time met a high-ranking officer whose underground name was Smolninsky. He was a man of outstanding personality and remarkable erudition. If only we had one such man, I remember thinking, in every large centre, the future of revolutionary democracy would not be in doubt.

I gave Smolninsky my news. He responded with impulsive enthusiasm. His excitement was so great that I should not have been surprised had he immediately stepped out on to the balcony and

called on the people in the street to rise in arms. Yet his loyalty to his country was absolute—to country, not Party. So vigorously did he condemn Stalin and his henchmen, particularly Zhdanov who had replaced Kirov in Leningrad, that his words went to my head. To my regret I denied my principles and, without authority from my comrades, asked him: 'What is your personal attitude to acts of individual terrorism?'

'I am categorically against them,' he replied.

'So am I. Yet do you not think that in our present conditions we ought to remove certain tyrants? What if the shot of 1934 were repeated in 1939?'

In Smolninsky's eyes I saw the same agony which I myself had known at a certain meeting of military oppositionists in 1934. 'In other words,' Smolninsky asked at last in a hushed voice, 'you are suggesting that I should organise the assassination of Zhdanov?'

I replied that this was what I meant—the removal of the man who was already the main ideologist of Soviet State-monopolistic imperialism.

Zhdanov in fact died a natural death on the very day that my name first appeared in the Western press, September 1st, 1948. I had already sent both to him and to Malenkov (as joint Secretaries of the Central Committee) letters declaring my reasons for escaping abroad and informing Zhdanov how and why, just before the war, the idea of organising his assassination had arisen.

But, though it was I who made the suggestion in Leningrad, the initial proposal to assassinate Zhdanov was not mine. I must also stress that I had no personal motive whatsoever for desiring Zhdanov's death, nor are acts of personal terror any part of the revolutionary democratic programme. The development of events and ideas alone forced us to consider such action. Further, though there have been many successful and unsuccessful acts of terrorism against the Stalin régime, not one of them has been the work of the men grouped round Comrade X. Though tempted at times, our movement has never decided on such a step. It is, therefore, not surprising that my unauthorised initiative met with the sharpest condemnation from our centre, and I was warned sternly against any further escapade of the kind.

This does not mean that Comrade X and his group had a soft spot for Zhdanov.

Zhdanov is mainly known in the West for his pronouncements about literature. Here are a few more details of his life and character.

He was a pure Russian who had joined the Party in 1915. From 1923 to 1924 he was Chairman of the Tver Executive Committee

of the Soviets, from 1924 to 1934 First Secretary of the Gorki Regional Committee of the Party; after the assassination of Kirov he became the dictator of Leningrad, and it was not long before he was made secretary of the Central Committee of the Party, in charge of ideological work. This led him in 1939 to the Politbureau, and to the chairmanship of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Supreme Soviet.

Russia has produced a number of monsters. The most primitive of them was Yezhov; Zhdanov the most cultured. I had frequent dealings with him. In 1947 I sat beside him in Stalin's study. I am not by nature bloodthirsty, but I often sincerely regret that, for moral and technical reasons, his death did not take place in 1939.

For Zhdanov, the be-all and end-all of socialism and communism was the grandeur of 'historic Russia'. The only communist parties which he recognised to be 'fraternal' were those which subordinated their own national interests to Soviet imperialism.

The post-war cold war was primarily due to Zhdanov. By the end of the Second World War Stalin was an old man with flagging energies. As First Secretary of the Central Committee, Zhdanov controlled the strings of propaganda and gave it its rabid anti-Western trend.

Above all, he was responsible for the new Russian racialism, *russachestvo*.¹ At an 'all-Slav' congress in Belgrade in 1947, a Soviet general of Russian origin attributed every liberating movement since the dawn of Europe to the Russians. Of this new official doctrine—Russians as the master-race—Zhdanov was the author. There were moments when we wondered in bewilderment if Zhdanov were not some reactionary White Guard General who had wormed his way into the Kremlin.

While the world was hovering on the brink of war, we knew for certain that Zhdanov was already shaping the Soviet policy of 'liberating' the adjoining states. For were those lands not part of the *Lebensraum* of 'Holy Russia'? We knew also that Zhdanov, the ideological spokesman of the Central Committee of the party of Lenin, was sending out feelers to Hitler's ideologist, Rosenberg, and, as head of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Government, was aiming at an understanding with Ribbentrop. His plan was simple: the Nazi gangster could have Western Europe on condition that the 'ancient Russian lands' reverted to Russia, and with them the remaining parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East (i.e. those territories which Tzarist Russia had coveted but not possessed).

¹ *Russachestvo*: Russianism.—Translator.

The real danger to the country in the early forties was that Stalin had fallen under Zhdanov's influence. Zhdanov was undoubtedly well-read, and better informed than Malenkov, Molotov or Voroshilov. As the final authority on doctrine, he was nicknamed the 'All Union Pope'. We had reliable inside information that Malenkov's suggestions were rarely accepted by the Central Committee Secretariat, but that Zhdanov's always went through without question.

But to return to 1939 and our plans to overthrow Stalin, supposing war developed. One evening several of us met at the flat of a lecturer at the Budyonny Military Academy; Schmidt was there (a member of the Voroshilov Leningrad Naval Academy), Zamrug (another scientist), Belinsky, who had joined me in Leningrad, and Smolninsky, in addition to our host and myself. The views of this group of Leningrad men can be taken as reflecting progressive political thought in the Soviet Union on the eve of the war.

Schmidt regretted a lost opportunity: had we moved at the time of the trial of Bukharin the peasants would have risen in his name. Now we had no one of his stature to inspire the people.

Zamrug did not agree: he thought that both Bukharin and Rykov had discredited themselves by their weak attitude in court. We needed a new man with a new name.

To Schmidt's indignation, Smolninsky said that we had such a man—Beria (though he, of course, did not belong to our underground movement). By releasing thousands from prison and even from sentence of death, Beria had acquired the right kind of prominence. The uprising must be timed so that Beria was away from the centre—in the Urals or in Asia—while Comrade X was in Moscow. In these circumstances it would be safe to offer Beria the position of head of the government; he would then join the revolt, splitting the Politbureau, and make it easy to arrest Stalin and his men. At this point Comrade X would become the effective head of the government. Smolninsky had prepared a list of the first cabinet. I cannot give the names, except to say that Belinsky was to control Foreign Affairs and Zamrug to replace Zhdanov in Leningrad. By the time the Government was established, Beria could easily be dealt with and we would forgive him his past crimes in recognition of his rôle in the new revolution. If the external enemy were not prepared to make peace, the revolutionary government would turn all its attention to national defence and would seek outside support, particularly from the parties of the Second

International. At the end of the hostilities a new Constituent Assembly would be elected and its first measure would be to terminate one-Party rule.

Zamrug doubted both Beria's readiness to play the part thus allotted to him and the chances that the masses would support the uprising. At any rate, he told us, he could see no prospect of this in Leningrad. Other difficulties loomed large. We realised how few men we had ready for key positions—administrators, politicians, generals, propagandists, etc. In the U.S.S.R. people had grown used to ceaseless and intense propaganda; we had no teams of experts, nothing to replace the existing machinery, since we were not a party with solid ramifications. We built our castles—and then again destroyed them.

We discussed the attitude of the average man-in-the-street and we agreed that few people were concerned with the structure of society or the nature of government. There was a widespread desire to get rid of Stalin but this was almost always because of some particular personal or local grouse, and always with the proviso: 'If only somebody else will make the first move.' There is a curious similarity between the potential rebels within the Soviet Union and the émigré communities abroad, both in their anxiety that somebody else should begin, and in their diversity of motives: the passionate belief that this or that individual aspect of the régime alone is the real obstacle to human progress. I was just as guilty of the same thing myself.

Schmidt quoted a conversation he had had with a typical young sailor; Belinsky, one with a nationalist of a Middle-Volga Republic.

Schmidt: 'But what exactly do you stand for? What's your aim? Have you a political programme?'

Sailor: 'Of course. We stand for the dissolution of the collective farms.'

Schmidt: 'What else?'

Sailor: 'We are against compulsory grain purchases.'

Schmidt: 'And what else?'

Sailor: 'The foreman system in the *kolkhozes* . . .'

Belinsky: 'And what exactly is your aim?'

Middle-Volga Nationalist: 'The overthrow of the occupying forces from Moscow.'

Belinsky: 'But beyond that? You say the Volga men want their own national state: capitalist or socialist?'

Nationalist: 'Socialist, of course. We are pure socialists. But

we want to work out our own form of socialism. We have our own ways.'

What would they do with the *kolkhozes*, Belinsky asked. The nationalist's reply was stereotyped: they would disband them at once. And if the majority of the peasants were against this?—No matter, they would still be disbanded. They conflicted with 'national sentiments'. Other industries would remain in State hands; but there was no need to plan all this in detail, all these problems would settle themselves once there was national independence.

We were by no means so sure. We found this to be the prevalent attitude; and yet—the truth must be faced—though we revolutionary democrats detested the *kolkhoz* system, we were not sure that it was any longer true to say this of the majority of the land-workers. The generation who had known the world of independent holdings was dying out. Even those who as small children had witnessed scenes of bloodshed when the farms were being collectivised could hardly remember the earlier order; they had grown up in a different world, with public day nurseries, state schools, state food supplies, state newspapers, magazines, books, films, plays, state training at every stage of mind and body. They had their dissatisfactions but not consciously with the social structure. To them *kolkhoz* life was normal, not an innovation.

In this and in other ways, plans for the overthrow of Stalinism and for what was to replace it took a different form from earlier days. The revolution had been made in the name of the workers and peasants against other social classes; today the whole ruling class of the U.S.S.R. was of worker and peasant origin. Nor could the Red Army be regarded as a workers' and peasants' army in opposition to rulers of some other class origin. Both our friends and our enemies were workers and peasants, and the Red Army had become an amorphous, classless, or rather 'inter-class' mass, with an altogether different mentality. The new programme had to be planned for the whole of society, not for one section. The old worker and peasant slogans have lost their validity in the U.S.S.R.

THE SOVIET-NAZI PACT

THAT SUMMER of 1939 I again went to the Crimea.

So short are Western memories that most people assume that 'the Crimea' was inhabited by 'Russians'. In fact the Crimeans were *Tatars*, a Turkish-speaking people who differ in history, religion, language and culture from the Russians (or the Belorussians or the Ukrainians) as much as the English differ from the Russians or even from the Japanese. The Crimea had been another Tsarist Russian conquest. The October Revolution promised the Crimeans independence but here too the promise proved to be an imperialist feint. As a result the relations between Moscow and the Crimea became bitterly hostile. Mass resistance did not exist, but Soviet State and Party personalities fell to assassins' bullets, there were occasional skirmishes in the mountains and no Russian was safe from a sudden isolated shot. The bare facts of this were known to us but we had no real contact with this spontaneous anti-Stalinist activity and considered that it was important to learn more.

In the neighbourhood of Dzankoy I stayed on a collective farm and had many talks with the gaunt, sullen, ill-clothed farmers. I lived again through the experience I had known when I returned to the North Caucasus after Stalin's collectivisation of the land. Was it true, I asked them, that they hated the *Russians*? Their answer was indignant: they had nothing whatever against workers and peasants of Russian nationality. But the Government and the Party were a different kettle of fish. 'We are a religious people,' they said, 'and they have destroyed our mosques. Generation after generation we have watered our land with our sweat and tears, now they have taken it away.'

I asked them what would be their attitude if war broke out between the Soviet Union and a capitalist country. (We were keenly interested in this question because the Crimean peninsula is a major strategic area.) Their answer was evasive.

'You would defend your homeland?'¹

¹ The word used here for homeland is *rodina*, i.e. birthland. It can mean both birthplace and country.—*Translator*.

'Everyone is bound to do that.'

'So you would fight the enemies of the U.S.S.R.?'

'That depends . . . We shall always fight for our Crimea.'

'Supposing there was war with Turkey?'

They shook their heads. Turkey did not want war. The Turks were Moslems and did not want war. The spokesman—an old man who gave his answers in broken Russian—stroked his beard and looked down; but the excited looks exchanged by the others told me that in such a war they would not fight for the U.S.S.R.

The next day I was given a two-seated horse cart with a driver, a curly-haired, middle-aged man who was a little deaf. He refused a cigarette; he refused chocolate.

'Afraid of being poisoned?' I asked.

He shook his head. 'Tatar no fear.'

I told him that I came from the Caucasus. Did he know the Caucasus?

'Many Tatar know Caucasus.'

'Like Caucasus?'

'What Tatar not like Caucasus?'

I assured him again that I was a Caucasian. 'Yes,' he said, 'Many Uruss¹ now Caucasian.'

'Why is that, do you think?'

'No good, Tatar think. Uruss think for Tatar.'

'You don't like the Russians,' I said. 'What harm have they done you?' All he would answer was: 'Me no know.' There were good and bad Russians, I said. He replied: 'Tatar good, Uruss no good.' What about the Caucasians, I asked.

'Caucasian good, Tatar good. Caucasus brother, Tatar brother.'

'So's the Russian,' I cried. 'We ought all to be brothers.' But he wouldn't have it. There were two worlds, one for the Uruss, one for the Tatar.

'Uruss not poor. Tatar poor.'

I gave it up. If he would not go beyond the bare facts, what conversation could there be?

A few days later I lunched with the Secretary of the Party Regional Committee; I asked him what was the chief reason for the popular discontent. He said it was the fact that the people no longer felt that this was their home-ground, and the recent attempts at uprooting local customs and at russifying the Crimeans only made things worse. He confessed that he had not expected such deep and widespread opposition. Young people went to Moscow and Leningrad

¹ *Uruss*: local dialect for 'Russian'.—*Translator*.

to be educated—and indoctrinated, but even those of them who had gone as loyal Stalinists returned as ardent nationalists.

What about the communists, I asked him. 'I am one of them,' he said, 'but do you expect me to be an enemy of my own people? For good or bad I am still a child of the Crimea, and seeing that the policy of the Party is contrary to our interests has driven me into the camp of the Right-wing deviation. I was expelled from the Party, but they reinstated me and gave me a fairly responsible position. Why? Because there is hardly a literate communist in the Crimea who has not been accused either of Right-wing deviation or of bourgeois nationalism.'

At the moment, he said, the Republic was run by political unrelies like himself; sooner or later they would be replaced by non-Crimeans; but did Moscow think that this would improve the Tatar attitude? He seemed genuinely worried that the Tatars might be driven into still more bitter opposition and into some form of national communism. This, he thought, could serve only the interests of world capitalism.

The Crimean situation in 1939 was only one example of the growth of national feeling in the non-Russian areas. Many people were beginning to regret Bukharin's policy. Others spoke of 'Back to Leninism'. But in this they were deceiving themselves as my own generation had been deceived, for only on the surface was Lenin's programme favourable to other peoples; in essence it was imperialistic and reactionary on the national question.

'Regarding the right of nations to self-determination,' wrote Lenin, 'the Bolsheviks advance a policy which is new in principle, namely: it is only conditionally that we support the bourgeois policy aimed at the recognition of such a right in practice, in deed. For the proletariat the national question is subordinate to the interests of the class struggle. We do not recognise the right of nations to self-determination, but solely within the proletarian state.'
(*Concerning the Right of Nations to Self-Determination.*)

This, after all, was merely the old Russian policy with a new coat of paint on it. All Stalin did was to dot Lenin's 'i's'. In fact the only movement in the U.S.S.R. which has ever put forward a genuinely revolutionary programme on the national question is that of the revolutionary democrats. We stand for the right of self-determination even if anywhere it leads to separation: we believe that only by starting from free, democratic, sovereign, equal countries is it possible to create a free union of free states and free nations.

I returned to Moscow in the second half of August, very shortly before the Soviet-Nazi Pact was signed. We knew that it was

coming, though it was still hard to believe that even the Stalin oligarchy could stoop so low. Immediately on my return I had a meeting with Comrade X and Belinsky. Never before or since have I seen Comrade X so disturbed. He was driven beyond the bounds of sane reasoning. 'If Ribbentrop comes to Moscow,' he said to us with cold fury, 'we must kill Molotov and him together. . . .'

* * * * *

The man who brought me, suffering from severe concussion, to the Central Hospital of the Officers Corps of the People's Commissariat of Defence, was Air Force Major-General N. M. Sergeyev, a former pupil of the Zhukovsky Academy now serving at the NKVD Special Service Airport of Bykovo outside Moscow.

So while Stalin, Molotov and Ribbentrop were sharing out the world in spheres of influence and signing secret protocols concerning Poland, Finland, Bessarabia and the Baltic States, all I knew was an occasional dream-like snatch of conversation between doctors about the complications following the damage to my skull. An operation was proposed but Comrade X demanded a written assurance that such a step was both unavoidable and safe. He called in the famous surgeon Burdenko who insisted that no operation was necessary and pulled me through.

The visits I received in hospital when, about September the 15th, I was well enough to have them, meant much to me. Political comrades could not come. It was too dangerous and Comrade X had forbidden it. But among the first to see me were the younger members of my staff; the most moving of all were some of my workers—technicians and mechanics. I had been a stern chief, yet they came to beg me to get well and come back soon. When Pomerantsev, Head of the Academy, visited me, I told him of this. 'The worse for you, Tokaev,' he said. 'The more your workers and lab-hands love you, the more you will be hated by the commissars and Party bureaucrats.'

How right he was. The hue and cry was already out and as the weeks passed the tension increased. Pomerantsev, of whose greatness and humanity I have said too little, was himself one of the first victims: he was sent to a small post in a distant East Siberian Garrison. Commissar Smolensky was imprisoned. The next was Lt.-General Andreyev, the Deputy *Nachalnik* of the Academy on the scientific side. As I have already related, they found their excuse to get me too.

The news that a Soviet-Nazi pact had been concluded was brought me by Adam Nikolayevich Apanasevich, Secretary of the joint

Party branch of the laboratory. A Colonel Engineer, he had previously worked in the Central Administration of the Air Force; but early in 1939 he had come under vague political suspicion and though he was not charged he lost his job. Kept at the disposal of the Cadres Department of the Academy, he had unsuccessfully applied for work to one department after another and had come to me in great distress: how was he to prove that he was not a spy? I astonished him by taking him at his word. He stared at me. I assured him that unless I had proof of lying, it was my principle to believe a man rather than a document, and I at once rang up Reshetnikov, Head of the Cadres Department, to say that I needed Apanasevich in my laboratory. (My real reason was that I could not resist a chance of trying to break through the bureaucratic deadlock.)

Now he sat beside my hospital bed telling me the appalling news. Uninformed as he had been of what was brewing, to him it was unthinkable. Hitler and Ribbentrop, yesterday's official monsters, were today peace-loving angels and friends of the Soviet Union. Nor was this all. The Red Army Political Department had issued an internal directive which showed clearly that within a very few days the Red Army would move against Poland. The Declaration of the Independence of Poland in 1917 had been one of the proudest acts of the Revolution; were we not witnessing the counter-revolution? On August 31st when the Supreme Soviet had ratified the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, not a voice was raised in protest.

'Adam Nicolayevich,' I asked him, 'what is the reaction of the masses?'

The masses applauded Molotov.

At a secret session Party activists were told that the Kremlin expected the peoples of the capitalist world to welcome the Red Army, and the fraternal communist parties to lead proletarian revolutions. It was said to be on the cards that in a very short time the whole of Europe would be Soviet.

On September 17th Molotov broadcast the news that the Red Army had begun the 'liberation' of Poland.

My secretary, Nina Kuznetsov, who had always heard me speak scathingly of people who showed weakness, found me with my eyes wet, and her own, I saw, were brimming over, I believe for the same reason. She asked me if I still felt ill after my 'accident'; then she asked me outright whether I approved of the liberation of what was being called 'Western Ukraine' and 'Western Belorussia'—or could I be against it?

I was, I said, against conquest and imperialist annexation, against barbarism and rank betrayal, against a pact of shame with

the Nazi gangsters. Yes, I was against any Soviet imperialist occupation of Poland.

Poor girl, she was very, very frightened. She had never heard such words before. She pretended, I found afterwards, to believe I was delirious.

I should not, of course, have spoken as I did. She was a Party member. Her behaviour was yet another proof that there were in the Party people who were human beings worthy of respect. She could easily have curried favour with the commissars by reporting me, but she was loyal and indeed, on more than one occasion, she helped to shield me from suspicion.

Events followed one another quickly. On September 24th the pact with Hitler was ratified. On September 28th came the pact by which Esthonia's independence was abolished. On October 8th the U.S.S.R. made claims on Finland. On October 11th came the Soviet-Lithuanian agreement. On October 28th Moscow denounced the understanding with Finland and on October 30th, without declaration of war, Soviet troops marched into the country. On October 31st Molotov declared that Germany was striving for peace and the aggressor was Great Britain. And so on.

Zhdanov declared: 'Our fine organisation and unbreakable strength will compel the Finnish reactionaries to shake from head to foot and to make their choice between the imperialist West and the revolutionary Soviet Union; we cannot remain indifferent to the conduct of Finland, because Finland is our neighbour, and only yesterday part of the territory of our country.'

Shtykov, another Leningrad Party leader, made frequent speeches, full of ambiguous demands. 'Finland,' he said, 'should be returned and reunited to the U.S.S.R. and thereby the security of Leningrad permanently guaranteed.'

But the Finns are a courageous people. The U.S.S.R. met with unexpectedly dogged resistance.

These were grim days for us for another reason. Many of us were opposed to the adventures into which the country had been plunged. But we failed at the testing time; we were powerless against the inner enemy.

There were many men in the Red Fleet who were utterly opposed to what they were doing, yet the Fleet played an important part in the operations against Finland. The comrade in whose room we had so recently met to discuss our brave oppositionist proposals was himself now on the Finnish front. Duties took Comrade X away from Moscow, Riz was with the Black Sea Fleet and Belinsky in the ranks of the Red Army; I had my duties in the laboratory and

was acutely aware of the watchful eyes of the NKVD. We were scattered. Who could organise resistance? How? With whose support? Alas, we were not in the fortunate position of émigré demagogues untrammelled by the obligations of a totalitarian régime, and we did not know the answers. Our heads were bowed, while around us tens of thousands of meetings, whipping up aggressive fervour, drowned all civilised voices.

My own institution, of course, was no exception. On my desk lay instructions from the Academy Political Department: immediately to hold a meeting of the whole staff and pass a unanimous resolution approving the wise decision of our beloved Government. What was I to do? Show an example by refusing to hold the meeting? That would be no example: the meeting would still be held and nobody would ever know that I had refused, let alone why. There would merely be one oppositionist less, one, moreover, who did hold such few advantages as responsible position and high rank give for opposition work in the U.S.S.R.

No—and let this be an object-lesson in Soviet affairs—I opened the meeting myself and delivered a passionate official speech. Nobody handed me a speech written in advance: the speech was my own. Without doubt, it is in the archives to this day. Nobody will find in it a hint of condemnation of the Kremlin's act of banditry. I said neither more nor less than I was expected to say. And all the time, in my heart I heard: 'Let somebody else begin, we'll come in and lend our support; if the head of the Academy orders anti-Stalin speeches, I will immediately issue suitable instructions to my subordinates.' And Pomerantzev, without doubt, was hearing in his inner heart: 'Let the O.C. Air Forces give the command for an anti-Stalin uprising. I will immediately relay the command to the Zhukovsky Academy.'

This is the hard truth about totalitarianism: centralism and the automatist obedience of a strictly ordered society are terrible forces. A change can only come when the spirit of revolt reawakens in the ordinary man with sufficient power to overcome his automatic responses to the directives of his Government.

In those weeks these forces were joined by another—the force of jingoist fever. The mass press and the all-nation radio are instruments of terrible power. People cease to think as individuals; their thoughts are modified, shaped, guided by the mind at the centre, and in those days one heard genial, sweet-natured, peaceable housewives talking with grave conviction of the need for the Red Army to 'smash the Finnish militarists'.

The approval meeting at the Aerodynamics Laboratory ground

on its monstrous course. The speakers were neither chosen nor prompted. Many of them were prominent men of science. Meritorious Academician Yuriev spoke: how convincingly, in his grave voice, he proved the necessity of smashing the Finns! Brigade General Ogloblin, a lecturer at the Academy, an old Trotskyist, added his word. Then there stood up a simple girl laboratory-assistant, Volodin, non-Party and a-political, and further fanned the conflagration already blazing in those loyal minds. Even the worker Salnikov—non-Party, no passionate lover of the U.S.S.R., who, when he came to see me at the hospital, said that the Poles had a right to live—now spoke in his blunt unlettered language: 'After all,' he said quite simply, 'Finland is a Russian country, so more power to the glorious Red Army which is liberating Finland from the fascists.'

Such were the contributions of decent folk: I am saying nothing of professional fanatics. Most people like to have their thinking done for them. Add to this that we were all constantly under the closest surveillance, that in every walk of life men were organised as in the Army and the higher their position the more magnified their every action: bear all this in mind—and now say what you yourself would have done.

To complete the picture of our mood I must say what we felt about the Western Democracies. Tragically, they offered us no hope. Both in the eyes of the thinking opposition and of the man in the street the Munich agreement had destroyed their moral authority. By that agreement Britain and France committed moral suicide. Hard though it is to say, in that crucial period between 1938 and 1941 hardly anyone in the U.S.S.R. had a warm place in his heart for the British or the French. There was no need for any central Party directive. At meeting after meeting the opinion was expressed with genuine spontaneity that the Western Powers would betray us at the slightest opportunity and that we must, therefore, keep the utmost vigilance regarding the West. We mistrusted it from the bottom of our hearts.

I have discovered abroad that people in the West find it hard to understand this in view of the fact that the British and the French showed their disapproval of Soviet as well as of Nazi imperialism. Of course we knew that there were notes of protest and sensational articles in the press, but we believed such criticism to be hypocritical or superficial. The U.S.S.R. is a country of extreme dynamism, that is to say of high-pitched, high-tensioned thought and speech, and has been so for over a quarter of a century. Soviet people think in violent terms; they do not understand undertones. The U.S.S.R. had laid hands on Poland but no declaration of war

had followed. The same in the case of the Baltic States. The U.S.S.R. had attacked Finland, but the Western Powers had not replied by a single bullet. Clearly the people of the Western world did not care a damn for the Poles or the Baltic peoples or the Finns. Clearly also, we concluded, if the Soviet Union were overrun by the Nazis the same cynical indifference would be shown towards us—I am speaking of the views of the ordinary man.

When, shortly after the fall of Paris, the senior officers of the Moscow garrisons and central military institutions were addressed by an Agitprop lecturer and he came to the description of the occupation of France by the Germans, the applause was as vociferous as if the Red Army had won a victory. He referred to the British as a nation of shopkeepers and there was more applause. A few days later I myself was lecturing to a highbrow audience in the Bauman district of Moscow; I dealt mainly with the military situation; I avoided compliments to the Nazis and spoke plainly and quietly; but when I came to the setbacks of Britain and France I was at once loudly applauded. There could be no question: my audience were infuriated—and enthusiastic—they thought the plutocrats and imperialists deserved what they were getting. Nor were these fanatics. They were lecturers and professors of various colleges, and not more than one in five was a Party man. My experience was the same when I lectured to the workers of Aircraft Factory No. 115. Not one question was put to me which suggested pro-French or pro-British feeling.

This common Soviet attitude to the West was of course only what the West had asked for. It was its reward for its frivolous flirtation with Stalin's State-monopolistic imperialism and for Munich. Laval had embraced Stalin and Molotov; now Stalin and Molotov were supplying the Panzer divisions with petrol to smash France. Eden had laughed away the suggestion that there was such a thing as 'red imperialism'; now that imperialism was helping the Luftwaffe to bomb Britain. Beneš had been on the side of the Kremlin adventurers against the revolutionary democrats in the Soviet Union; now the new bloodstained brothers of his Kremlin friends had destroyed his country.

The news of the Soviet invasion of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Rumania came as a surprise to us: we had known that it was on the programme but we had not known the date. The reason for our ignorance was the breakdown of our direct sources of inner-Kremlin information. We were scattered, and I was beginning to be under a cloud. Animin now avoided seeing me, and all my efforts to obtain a meeting with Beria had failed. I already felt the ground uncertain under my feet.

WAR

JUNE 22nd, 1941, was a Sunday, a lovely, sunny day. I had spent the whole of Saturday at a closed Party conference, listening to speeches on the need for revolutionary vigilance, and I felt worn out. I got up late, dressed at my leisure in civilian clothes, and was having breakfast with my wife when the radio, playing light music in the background, broke off suddenly. Aza thought that something was wrong with the set, and turned the knobs. Then, with unusual solemnity, the speaker announced that at midday the Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Comrade Molotov, would speak.

I had first met Molotov in February, 1931, on the very day I was elected a Party member; since then I had heard him make many important speeches, and, like many others, I knew him for the worst two-faced cynic mankind had ever known. Machine-like, the square jaw would work under the square forehead, producing square-cut phrases. He was the perfect mouthpiece of Stalin's State-monopolistic imperialism. Now it was his lot to announce, in the same square-cut language, that for nine hours Hitler's aircraft had bombed the Ukraine, Belorussia and the Crimea, that for nine hours Nazi Panzer divisions had been moving forward into Soviet territory. Or was the language quite so square-cut as before? We heard him through and were struck for the first time by a note of ill-ease, hesitation, uncertainty, almost—could it be fear? Other people who heard the speech had the same impression.

The hour to pay had struck. How recently had this same 'granite-backside'¹ announced our brave deeds in Finland, Poland, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bessarabia and North Bukovina!

A few minutes after the announcement, I was called by telephone to report to the Academy, in battle kit, complete with gas mask. While I dressed I heard our neighbours' thoroughly non-political

¹ In the U.S.S.R. Molotov is popularly known as *kamenny zad* (granite-backside), the latter because he has spent his whole life chair-borne, showing a greater ability to sit others out than any man with more normal gluteal muscles.—*Translator*.

wives exchanging views with Aza. There was tense excitement, there were tears, above all there was astonishment. Surely, surely, Stalin must have known that the Nazis could not be trusted! Had the Kremlin really been so naïve?

All faces were grim and determined. In the Underground Station I met Vladimir Vasilievich Golubyev, my former teacher and a good friend, an aerodynamicist who was corresponding member of the Academy of Science, a non-Party man, an old social-democrat who was no lover of Stalin's 'socialism'. He was always a man sparing of words and most restrained in his expressions. Only when at last we had emerged above ground, amid the roar and rumble of the great city, did he open his mouth. 'Scoundrels, renegades, traitors . . .' The unaccustomed epithets poured from his lips. Traitors, to have thrown away the chances of alliance with Britain and France and to have played with Hitler. On the way Professor Komarov joined us. Komarov said that a Russian only wakes up when he gets a straight left to his jaw. 'At last we understand that whatever tyrants pretend to be, they are not to be trusted.' He went on, talking with unprecedented freedom: in the past, Russia had never won a war alone. But we need not lose heart. In the end, the French and British would come to our aid, even though in 1939 we did turn our backs on them. Not because they liked us, but because it would suit them.

The mere thought of outside aid was somehow comforting—and at the same time shaming. We had been boastful and rash; now we were alone.

But these were Moscow intellectuals: what of the masses, what of the non-Russian peoples, how would they take it? Already, all round me, I was able to see and hear the answer. How light-headed had been those who in the past year or two had toyed with the idea of taking advantage of a war situation to establish freedom. The people sensed that Hitler would never give them what Stalin had denied. He would make the Ukraine not free but a German appendage, the Caucasus—a colony for German settlement, the 'Russians'—a second-class race. And when my learned colleagues openly criticised the Kremlin, I found myself compelled to answer curtly: 'First let us get out of this hole, then criticise the Politbureau.'

When the war began I was by rank a 'Military Engineer of the Third Rank', by academic status an 'engineer-mechanic specialist on aircraft design' (M.Sc., Eng.), and a 'Scientist of the First Class' and 'Candidate of technological Sciences' (Ph.D., Eng.). My

official position was 'Deputy *Nachalnik* of the Scientific-Research Department of the Zhukovsky Academy'. In practice my duties fell under two heads: I was officially at work on plans for a winged rocket for intermediate ranges; while at the same time I was in charge of the Aircraft Department of the Moscow Institute of Engineers of Geodesics, Aerophotography and Cartography, and in addition lecturing on aerodynamics and aircraft construction. I was now ordered to concentrate exclusively on work on the rocket plans. I did not question the decision; there was clearly no time for romantic ideas of going to the front. We were the potential creators of Soviet military techniques, and our laboratories *were* our front.

The next day I was summoned by one of the Deputies of the Principal Engineer of the Soviet Air Forces. He had sent his car to fetch me, and in it I found Kostikov, inventor of the celebrated Soviet multiple rocket-gun known as *Kate* (the *Katiusha*). Had I heard the news? he began, and then announced that our front-line Air Force had cracked up; we were without fighters.

We found the boss in a savage mood. Vast sums had been spent, the last ounce of energy squeezed out of technicians—and with what result? All gone in twenty-four hours. An Air Force débâcle. How soon could the rocket I was working on be ready?

I said that the work had not even reached the stage of blue prints. Why not? Because only two months ago the same Stalin who now wanted immediate results had put the stopper on the work. And I added that it was not six months since the Air Force command had removed me from my laboratory and wasted my time in endless Party courts, rather than take my word that one of our best precision mechanics had only been so many minutes late for the morning shift.

My unfortunate boss did not know what to answer. He himself was between the upper and the nether millstones. He could only pass on orders: the rocket was to be ready at the earliest possible moment.

Kostikov could not contain himself. 'Rockets are not ready at the earliest possible moment,' he said. 'Take my own work—I was on the point of completing it when I was subjected to petty tyranny and the shame of a ridiculous arrest. Under war conditions work will be still more difficult. You simply cannot expect Tokaev to give a date.'

'I am not expecting it,' cried the boss; 'do please understand that it is Stalin who demands one.'

'Comrade Stalin is not knowledgeable in these matters,' I said,

'so he can make no such demand at all. And we are not infants in arms, we understand the danger, but I will give no date, not even an assurance that there will be one.'

But the boss continued to press me, finally telling us that he had reason to believe that Stalin was sure the job could be done by the end of August, or in early September. Kostikov agreed with me that at least a year was needed. 'Let us talk as man to man,' cried the Deputy. 'If we cannot turn the scales in the next month or two we are defeated.' At this, Kostikov boiled over and upbraided him for suggesting that we were so weak. This embarrassed our chief, but nevertheless he solemnly assured us that it was a fact that our front-line resources had proved inadequate and we were routed. Were we to expect the Nazis to halt while we gathered together our broken forces?

Never had I heard Kostikov speak with so much dignity. Drawing himself up to his full height, he declared that even if they lost their leaders, the people would stand firm and drive out the enemy. 'Our mechanised forces have been routed not because the peoples of the U.S.S.R. are of poor quality,' he concluded firmly, 'but because at the head they have had men without talent who have only known how to poke their noses in where they know nothing.'

How rapidly the atmosphere had changed; the air was fresh like a sudden cold spell after enervating days of depression. Such a conversation, under Soviet conditions, was fantastic. Only forty-eight hours earlier it would have been beyond a man's wildest dreams to use such language to a superior so near the Kremlin. And how meekly the great man swallowed it! Indeed, we soon realised that the men at the top had lost their heads. They knew only too well that their reactionary régime was totally devoid of real popular support. It was based on terror and mental automatism and depended on peace; war had changed all that. Six years later, in Germany, Kostikov and I recalled this episode, but not to laugh; we regretted that in those early days of the war the Soviet peoples could not turn against their Kremlin bosses and give them a drubbing.

Returning to my office at the Academy, I found a gathering of my colleagues, all military engineers and all Party members with the exception of one Beskaravayny. We all knew each other, and could speak frankly. Their mood reflected that of the man in the street. Beskaravayny, who had never before shown any interest in politics, startled us with the suggestion that the first step to achieve the maximum of resistance was to split the Union into its constituent parts. He thought that an independent Ukraine and an independent

Caucasus would fight better than as parts of the U.S.S.R. Klimov was ready with an attack on the Politbureau: they ought all to be dismissed, then the people would save the country. Kokoryov's proposals were even more startling: suddenly the voice of rabid anti-semitism rang out, and the tabooed word *Yid* was dug out of the past. I told him that his words breathed the spirit of Nazism. 'Of course Hitler's a swine,' said Kokoryov, 'and we must crush him, but his Jew policy is brilliant.' The Party leader who was present did not argue with him, but merely sniggered with a sort of approval.

This incident was not, I think, without significance. I cast back my mind: the martyrs of the great trials had almost all been Jews: Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kameniev, Reinhold, Drobni, Rakovsky, were all Jewish. Even Bukharin, a pure Russian, had been spoken of, almost in Nazi terms, as a man who had sullied himself with the Jews. Nor had Beria halted that anti-semitic tendency. He had certainly masked it, but at the same time he had made it more venomous. The fact is, the anti-semitic spirit of Hitler's totalitarianism very soon infected Stalin's totalitarianism. One channel was provided by Russian émigrés used by Hitler, who had contrived to introduce anti-Jewish catchwords into the U.S.S.R. At the same time, there can be no doubt that the war with Germany revived a number of old Russian traditions, and anti-semitism was one of them.

The notion of splitting up the Soviet Union was another idea which suddenly appeared and spread and the authorities made no particular effort to suppress it. It was based, of course, on the illusion that the Ukraine or Belorussia or the Caucasus, as separate entities, would not be absorbed by Germany. But the Kremlin had no intention of making the experiment and as far as the peoples were concerned, the Nazis soon scotched the idea; instead of so much as offering slogans of liberation they regarded the 200,000,000 inhabitants of the U.S.S.R. as 'all Russians' and treated all of them as an inferior race. Thus Hitler threw away one of the most powerful weapons lying at his hand.

The atmosphere of Soviet life had indeed changed with lightning speed. On the very first day of the war, Battalion Commissar Babkin, an unpleasant character who was deputy-chief of the political department of the Academy, sent for me and at once registered the change, for instead of ordering, he *asked*. He wanted me to make a rallying patriotic speech at a mass meeting of the Academy: it was most suitable that I should make it because I represented a national minority. I had had this battle once before, on the twentieth anniversary of the Comsomol, and once again, with indignation,

I refused to speak in any rôle other than that of a citizen of the U.S.S.R.

Babkin reminded me what fateful days we were all living through. Surely, he suggested, I could now afford to throw away my pedantic prejudices. I balanced my principles against my explicit duty as a member of the revolutionary democratic movement—to mask my dissident views wherever this best served the cause—and my principles won: I maintained my refusal.

Now there was no infuriated threat to put me on a charge; no fist thumped the table, and when twenty minutes later Colonel Danilov, *Nachalnik* of the Political Department, demanded to see me, and I maintained my attitude, he too collapsed. It was instructive. It was amusing also for another reason to be in his room at that time. In and out moved the commissars, his assistants, and what a sorry crowd they looked! I thought of the commissars of the early revolutionary days, testy, violent, opinionated, forceful men. But these were a race of petty officials. They questioned nothing, they only saluted and clicked their heels, with *Yes, sir, it shall be done, sir, I understand, sir, quite so, sir*. They wore uniform like ours, differing only by the red stars on their sleeves, but looking at them you felt the pride of being an officer. These were nothing but dressed-up civilians.

My next surprise was the bearing of one of my women assistants, the young, charming and good-looking widow of a pilot, now a senior lieutenant technician. On the first day she was all bewilderment. Had we not the advantage of the Germans in man-power and territory; how was it then that they had been able to rout us in a single day? We had put up a worse resistance than the Tsarist armies of 1914–17. We must discover and remove the causes of our failure. What did she think the causes were, I asked her. Stalin? The Politbureau? The one-Party tyranny? The Soviet system as a whole? She would not say, but it was not difficult to guess her thoughts.

Only three days later she came to see me again, no longer bewildered or questioning. She was commanding. She had heard a rumour that Major-Engineer Pavlenko and I had been summoned by Stalin and ordered to form an Air Force regiment for destructive operations in the enemy rear. Liza wanted to join it, and I had difficulty in persuading her that there had not been any such assignment. (I should, however, confess that even if there had been, with myself in charge, I should have refused her. I had then, and still have, rigid views on women in men's uniform: in war, women play a more important rôle by remaining the gentle sex. Later on 'social-

workers', as they were called, recruited girls to be pen-friends of men at the front, and official reports were unanimous that these letters, breathing femininity, did infinitely more to hearten and stimulate the men than all the Party political work. I am convinced that a nation which demands masculine qualities of its women thereby casts away an enormous moral force and risks defeat.)

Most significant of all, when I reminded Liza how recently she had refused to believe that we could win, I received an interesting answer. '*A ya razvié ne russkaya?*' she asked—'Am I not a Russian?' 'Not believe in victory?' she cried. 'There is not a woman who does not!'

Under our eyes, with startling swiftness, a deep transformation was taking place. About a week later, Liza was again in my room, together with a veteran non-Party lecturer in mathematics, Kotovich. In the course of conversation he remarked that pre-revolutionary Russia was only covered over with a thin Stalinist crust. This subterranean Russia was already taking over from Stalin. There was a very ancient tradition of resistance to Teutonic sword-bearers; when the native soil was in danger it did not matter who sat on the throne, Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Nicholas II or Stalin I.

'You mean that we are going to win?' said Liza. 'I am certain of it.'

'You are right,' said Kotovich, 'Russia can be knocked out, but it can never be occupied . . .'

How near to utter defeat we had been in those first days has never been generally known in the West. On the fifth day of our war, between duties, Pavlenko and I found a convenient patch of grass on the 'drome, to take a short nap. We had scarcely settled down when a military transport plane touched down, and Senior-Lieutenant Tomayev appeared. Hearing me call, he came straight over and told us a scandalous story which later many independent eye-witnesses confirmed.

The frontier aircraft garrison of Lomza¹ had made merry on the eve of the Nazi onslaught. The dance had, of course, been preceded by a Party assembly, with all the usual speeches about the all-conquering power and wisdom of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, and the standardised references to the Anglo-French 'war-instigators'. The dance was followed by a general carousal. And

¹ Lomza—a town in eastern Poland, but then annexed to the U.S.S.R.—*Translator.*

while the carefree couples were busy under the bushes in the park, or between cosy sheets, and the last strains of the accordions were wafted 'nostalgically' through the summer night air, at three a.m., the Nazis, in a most unmannerly way, descended with flights of bombers and flocks of tanks.

There was no resistance. Without the slightest difficulty the Germans mopped up our fighter squadrons. Before many minutes had gone, most of the aircraft had been destroyed and the hangars were burning. There was general disorder. The command had been killed.

'I found myself with Major Solodovnikov,' Tomayev went on, 'and he tried to get things together again, but the regimental commissar held a pistol to his temple and ordered him at once to withdraw to the east.'

'You mean to run away?'

'Those were his orders.'

Pavlenko, beside himself with indignation, seized the lieutenant by the collar and shook him. 'And why did you not shoot the swine?' he cried.

At a station to the west of Lodz the O.C. had been warning his superior officers for a fortnight that the Nazis were about to attack, but with the indifference of traitors they invariably answered: 'That is not your business.'

In spite of this, on June 21st—his information was accurate—on his own initiative he declared a state of emergency and issued orders to be ready for instant action. The regimental commissar then charged him with disseminating unnecessary alarm and insisted on the orders being cancelled. This was done eight hours before the Luftwaffe struck. The result was practically the same as at Lomza. The O.C., though wounded, tried to organise some resistance, but his only successful act was to shoot the commissar. When the German motorised units reached the aerodrome, he handed all the important documents to a young engineer whom he sent east, and shot himself. His wife and daughter had been killed in the first raid.

But if in key regions the commissars and demagogues let us down, this, I should hasten to add, did not mean that all the commissars or all the Party officers were equally to blame. There were many cases of conduct of the highest order on the north-west front. For instance, when the officer commanding a certain aerodrome was killed, Battalion Commissar Semionov took over the military command, shot a regimental commander who had tried to establish his authority over him and had ordered a retreat, and

led his men into a counter-attack. He fell fighting, but his example had a powerful effect over a wide area.

After the war, we came upon the echo of this incident in the archives of Hitler's Chancellery—on a telegram reporting the setback to German arms caused by this one man's courage, the Führer had noted 'Amazing!' I heard the story myself from an army doctor named Karamzin, wounded and lying in the Sverdlovsk Military Hospital. Karamzin himself had been saved by another political officer, Antontzev, whose upper arm had been smashed by a bullet—an extremely painful wound—but who in spite of this had shouldered the incapacitated doctor and carried him to safety. And, for the instruction of Western journalists who sometimes seem surprised that even after Yezhov and collectivisation there should be men who believed in communism, during this rescue the young commissar still talked about the great inspiration of Marxism-Leninism, and said that it was only now, when it was tested in battle, that he fully realised its power.

The mass meeting of the Academy on the second day of the war was instructive. Faces were grim. Belief in the usual panaceas of Party and Government and the all-wisdom of Stalin and Molotov had vanished completely. Everybody knew that Panzer divisions were rolling unhindered eastward and that the Luftwaffe had free passage through our skies. How often had Voroshilov and his deputies declared in this very hall that if we fought, it would be on the enemy's soil! As a rule, before assemblies began there was a lively rumble of conversation, a universal flashing of broad smiles as jokes were bandied about. Now voices were hushed in expectation. Of what?

General Klovok spoke; he was *Nachalnik* on the political side; then Sokolov-Sokolionok, the *Nachalnik* of the Academy; both were brief and obviously worried. Then came several other speeches, among which Pavlov's was the most memorable merely because he waved his arms with more conviction and shouted his abuse of the enemy in the loudest voice. How badly off, it seemed, the pitiable Germans were. 'We, on the other hand, are led by that genius, Comrade Stalin. They have the putrescence of fascism, we—the vigour of triumphant socialism.' A standard Stalinist speech indeed, but, oh wonder, it met with faint, sparsely scattered hand-claps, principally from the commissars.

At last the rota of speakers was ended, and a whipper-snapper of a commissar was handing the ready-made resolution up to the table for 'unanimous' approval, when my old friend and teacher,

Academician Yuriev, asked me if I would not speak and 'flay these demagogues'. I preferred to refrain and suggested that he should use his authority. Without waiting for permission from the chair—an unheard-of liberty—the grand old man strode to the tribune—to the pointed accompaniment of loud applause.

Yuriev roundly attacked the nonsensical notion that Germany had no brilliant men and could have none under fascism. 'How frivolous and how stupid to think so. Social and political forms in themselves create neither talents nor fools. History has known no country which was wholly bad or wholly good. Every social order has its gifted men and its incompetents, its wise heads and its foolish ones . . .'

The stir which went through the hall was worth seeing; the words put new life into us, but we were also amazed because before the war even Academician Yuriev would never have ventured even to hint at such things. There was suddenly an angry interjection accusing Yuriev of defeatism, but this was swiftly answered by non-Party Colonel Professor Muraviov, who could be heard to cry: 'It's numskulls like you who have brought the country to the verge of catastrophe! Now have the decency to hear a wise man speak. He is no defeatist, but a man who really loves his country.'

Yuriev continued. We no longer had fighter aircraft, but the heroic peoples of the Soviet Union still lived, and there lay our real hope. We must end bureaucratism and pompous loud-mouthed talk. We had been judging competence by speeches, and speeches had concealed from us the fact that we were wholly unprepared. We had to pay for it by seeing our towns bombed, just as the British had to suffer Coventry because of Munich. Now we must work hard; our slogan must be: *All for the front line*. History would judge those who had let us down.

Only yesterday, an official meeting would have been unthinkable which did not include ovations to Stalin. Now only old Yuriev received warm applause. Men and women alike were passionately occupied with one single thought—to defeat the enemy. (A fact worth remembering by those who nowadays talk of diplomacy by show of naked strength, without any positive ideals, ideology or slogans, and by those others who think that crude anti-communism is a fulcrum on which anything can be moved. These two extremes of unthinking approach to the Soviet problem in fact constitute great dangers for the world.)

A few days later the Deputy C.O. Air Forces held a conference with a number of us lecturers and research workers. The task was to create a new Air Force in the shortest possible time. 'Don't

tell me it isn't possible,' said the General. 'I know it isn't but when the fate of our country hangs by a hair, the impossible must be done.' We were to forget everything except our work, we were to forget the difference between day and night. The factories were to step up the pace of turning out MiG-3's, fighters and Pe-2 bombers. Any hindrance must be dealt with ruthlessly, the guilty must be summarily shot. There were no questions, but when the meeting was over I asked the General what I was to do about my work on the rocket. He shouted at me. The very question was a crime. My task was to train new pilots, not to do research into rockets.

Our rulers had lost their heads. Yesterday it had been 'abandon all for the rocket', now it was 'abandon all to train fighter pilots'. Stalin was crying out for new, non-existent battalions. Beria's one thought was the suppression of panic. Malenkov, heading the aircraft and tank industries, thought that these were all that mattered. Voznesensky, chief planner, demanded endless costings of all kinds of work and production. Of course all these were necessary, but not one to the exclusion of the others.

The mad work began. Young men and pilots who had lost their aircraft poured in, and we were expected to turn them out as accomplished fighter pilots in a maximum of two weeks. Aircraft factories worked round the clock in three shifts on a seven-day week. As the aircraft came off the production line, inexperienced youths took them straight up into battle.

This was one of the most menacing truths behind the brave official communiqués: we were fighting by what amounted to improvisation. An incredible percentage of our battle aircraft crashed on their first flight; with them crashed invaluable young personnel. Our men had not sufficient training with high-speed craft—both the MiG-3 and the Pe-2 required more practice. Inevitably there were serious material defects. Adequate testing and checking were ruled out; fitters were over-tired; the demand far exceeded men's capabilities. Yet we had to admit that the supreme command had no choice. Grimly we gave all to the one end—to equip the front line.

Certain émigrés, safely ensconced in their armchairs in the West, see fit to say that this was surely the hour to overthrow Stalinism, and accuse me of treachery to freedom for the part I played personally in this all-out effort. They forget that not only the fate of the Soviet homeland, but also of all Europe, hung by a thread. If I am proud of anything, I am proud that I was one of those who knew what came first, proud of having taken my proper place in the ranks of decent Soviet men and women, proud of having been one of

those who gave all they had to fight the Nazi-fascist coalition. Now when, by force of circumstance, I find myself a member of a free society, I trust that if need be I shall know how to play my part in its defence, for I am convinced that this will be to the interests also of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.

FLIGHT

'THE COMMAND considers you to be a faithful son of our native land,' NKVD Major Klintzov declared; 'we are fighting a great war for our fatherland against an external enemy, and our internal squabbles must take second place.'

Within a fortnight of the outbreak of the war, orders had changed three times. Now I was summoned by NKVD Colonel Veniaminov, to whom had been assigned the recruitment of a partisan force on a civilian basis. (It will be remembered that the foreign language I had studied for Academy examinations was German.) In the name of the Party, of our Government and of our much-suffering native land, he asked me to prepare for partisan warfare in enemy-occupied country. 'The position on all fronts is taking a most unfavourable turn,' he added; 'indeed, there can hardly be said to be any front, merely a flood of Nazi armies sweeping eastwards, so that Moscow may any day find itself in the *Nazi rear* . . .'

'Moscow?' I cried. He answered me that he meant it and when I asserted that this could never happen, he said: 'Don't let's waste time, Comrade Tokaev. In the view of the Party and the Government . . .' Angrily I interrupted that I was not interested in the view of the Party and the Government, *if* it was based on delivering Moscow to the enemy. I spoke of the workers of the U.S.S.R. and assured the NKVD man that they would never consent to what they considered *their* capital passing into fascist hands. Veniaminov answered with a resigned smile. I was only saying what others had said. He congratulated me on my patriotism; that indeed was what they had counted on in choosing me as one of the organisers of this partisan force—did I consent to join it?

Now, according to the instructions of Comrade X, such partisan work was precisely what I should avoid. We were, as far as we could, to remain in the main centres, to be ready to take over power if the Stalin régime broke down. But temperamentally the proposal suited me well; I wanted to get to physical grips with the enemy, and I consented.

What Veniaminov told me showed as clearly as possible that the

Soviet resistance had practically ceased to exist. The enemy had ample heavy armament; we already had only our man-power; the state of our morale was therefore a prime consideration. Veniaminov went on to speak of one of the principal difficulties which would face us: the enemy would make use of Russian fascist émigré units, units speaking Russian, units with dangerous ideas—against whom only educated men could be trusted to wage war. He spoke of all Russian émigrés as fascists; he spoke of how these were to be dealt with. But I have always liked my terms of reference clear, and I asked if this meant that all émigrés were to be regarded as fascists.

Veniaminov smiled. Sarcastically he asked me if I happened to know of any who were not. They were all fascists or White Guards.

‘Even the Menshevik socialists? The Social Revolutionaries, the Populists—and Nationalists?’

‘I repeat,’ Veniaminov said firmly, ‘they are *all* fascists, and must be treated as such. Before you are sent out you will all be given detailed talks on the subject just to make things absolutely clear.’

We were not very thoroughly informed about fascists among Russian émigrés. We knew that in ‘Royal’ Yugoslavia there existed a Russian Fascist Party headed by General Chersky, and that there had been another in the early thirties abroad, led by one Rodzayevsky. We would certainly fight such men, but we revolutionary democrats had no intention of warring against sundry democrats, liberals, labour people, social-democrats. So I told Veniaminov—he had two others present as witnesses—that if I were despatched to the rear of the enemy, I should concern myself exclusively with fighting the enemy—fascism.

The further discussions about this partisan movement in which I was to play a part are interesting. Even if Veniaminov may not have grasped why I spoke as I did, he at least understood the implications of my words. Moreover, in all our conversation I had not made one single reference to the wisdom of Stalin, to Party or Government, to the ‘conquests of the Soviet régime’, or to socialism. Nor had the NKVD men made any comment on what—in normal times—would have been a striking omission.

I had another meeting with the NKVD men and it became clearer than ever how much the centre of gravity had shifted; instead of giving orders they were carefully feeling their way, turning a deaf ear to much that was said, because, relying now not on the chosen few of the Party, but on the masses of the nation, they could not condemn rebels like myself, which would have been to condemn and estrange the very masses on whom they had to rely.

Again I felt it only right and proper to rub home the point that only yesterday I was still an 'offspring of Bukharin' or a 'bourgeois liberal'. 'I have behind me,' I said, 'a whole list of "crimes"—are they not a hindrance to my doing this work?' But I could not get Klintzov to say more than that they—the NKVD—were not interested in my past activities. He began to get down on paper the necessary information. What was required will possibly be so foreign to Western ways that the general outline of the interview may be worth recording.

'Then can we proceed to fill in a small questionnaire?'

'Questionnaire? But surely you already have my dossier?'

'Oh, that is such a muddle that we can't make head or tail of it,' he said. 'Shall we begin? Tokaev, Grigori Alexandrovich . . . Year of birth?'

I smiled and groaned—inwardly—to think that this was considered necessary, when every minute counted in our war effort, but I had to go through with it. 'Born 1909,' I said.

'Place of birth?'

'North Ossetian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Caucasus.'

'Nationality?'

'North Ossetian.'

'Party adherence?' (As if one could belong to any party!)

'Member of VKP(b).'¹

'Education?'

'Higher technological.'

'Military education?'

'Higher military.'

'Political education?'

'Higher political.'

'Occupation?'

'Aircraft design military engineer-mechanician.'

'Nature of work?'

'Scientific research work on aerodynamics.'

'Position held?'

'Deputy *Nachalnik* of the Scientific Research Department of the Zhukovsky Academy, Lecturer in the same institution, *Dozent* of Aerodynamics and Aircraft Construction.'

¹ Russian initials of All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks), by which the Party was commonly spoken of in the U.S.S.R. The 'b' was always small because in the first printed statement after the 'Bolshevik' party split off in 1903, by a printer's error the word was given a small letter, a trifle rigorously commemorated by tradition.—*Translator*.

'Degrees held?'

'I am a Candidate of Technological Sciences.'

'Languages?'

'Russian, Ossetian, German, Ukrainian and a little Georgian.'

'What do you know of Germany?'

'That it is in Europe, and at war with us.'

'Comrade Tokaev, I don't mean that: are you familiar with the ideas of German National-Socialism?'

'Completely. I have read *Mein Kampf* more than once.'

'Are you serious, Comrade Tokaev?'

'Completely, Comrade Klintzov.' I knew I stood to be arrested, even shot as a spy for that. 'But now I declare openly that I did study *Mein Kampf* in secret, and am not sorry that I did so.'

'I must admit that I am not sorry either,' said Klintzov. 'It would be a very good thing if we suddenly found a thousand men acquainted with the book. Do you not think that we made a serious error in prohibiting the study of the ideology of our enemy?'

'I am sure of it . . .'

'Do you know anything about the organisation of the Nazi Party?'

'Yes indeed. I know a great deal about it. That, too, I have studied in secret.'

'Have Nazi newspapers come your way?'

'They have not.'

'That is a pity. What is your opinion of German science?'

'What in particular interests you?'

'Well, German scientific literature—know anything about that?'

'I regularly get the *Luftwissen, Luftfahrtforschung, FDI, Zeitschrift für Angewandte Mechanik und Mathematik, Flugsport*, and the published papers of the German Aviation Research Academy.'

'Do you know any Germans personally?'

'Yes, some of their scientists; for instance, Professor Dr. Kurt Tank, chief designer of the *Fokke Wulf* aircraft. I met him last year, when we were still "blood brothers" and a party of German aviators visited our Academy, including my laboratory.'

'Fine, Comrade Tokaev. That is a detail of particular importance.'

'But only six months ago I was under suspicion of espionage because of it!'

'Don't you know the old Russian saying?' said Klintzov. 'Long memory should be blinded.'¹ One more question: Are you well up in the history of partisan wars?'

¹ *kto staroé pomianet, tomu glaza von.*

'I have never studied it specially, Comrade Klintzov,' I replied—it will be seen how seriously partisan warfare was being taken.

'You will have to make a study of it,' said Klintzov. 'The more detailed, the better. Eyesight?'

'Excellent.'

'Hearing?'

'Excellent.'

'Cough?'

'Only when I have a cold.'

'General health?'

'Excellent.'

'Nerves?'

'Iron.'

'Do you drink?'

'I don't mind good wine, but not vodka.'

'Raw spirits?'

'Spirits?'

'Yes, spirits. Partisan warfare doesn't go without it.'

'Then I should be no good as a partisan. But if I had to drink in the country's interest, I would even drink varnish.'

'Endurance? Supposing you were caught and tortured? Could you stand it?'

'I don't know. You could make enquiries in your own special department of the Academy if you liked. They have some evidence.'

How different all this was from the usual NKVD inquiry! There was not one question this time about my Stalinist political purity.

Yet our problem as revolutionary democrats was very much in our minds. Was not this perhaps the very moment to attempt to overthrow Stalin? Many factors had to be considered: what would be the attitude of the Western countries at war with Hitler if, after an internal convulsion, the U.S.S.R., headed by new leaders, offered to fight side by side with them?

I also had my own problem: if I reached the German rear as a partisan, would I not be wiser to change sides? But my own inward answer to this was a firm *no*. At no point, let me say it with all positiveness, at no point did I even consider the notion of crossing to the Nazi side; I rejected the very suggestion out of hand. This may not be to the liking of a number of émigrés, nor of many Germans, but the plain truth is that I do not like their ideas now any better than I did then.

All at once the plan of sending me to organise partisan fighting was dropped. Just when I was expecting final orders to make my

way through the German lines, new orders came—a fourth change of directive since the beginning of the war: I was to return to my desk and get on with my plans for a rocket bomb. This was due to the intervention of Comrade X, though only three people knew of it at the time. I had naturally told him of my talks with the NKVD, and though he approved in principle of my readiness to be a partisan, he nevertheless wanted me to stay in Moscow.

In those days Comrade X was convinced that it was touch and go for Stalin. The pity of it was that we could not see Hitler as a liberator. Therefore, said Comrade X, we must be prepared for Stalin's régime to collapse, but we should do nothing whatever to weaken it, lest by any such action we should weaken the anti-Nazi forces of the world. He gave me the task of making this plain to all who shared our views.

A close circle of revolutionary democrat leaders held an underground meeting on 5th July in a room of the House of Scientists (34 Kropotkin Street). Belinsky took the chair and I was asked to make the basic report. I analysed the situation: in spite of our continued detestation of Stalinism our policy had to be revised because we had no doubt that the greatest danger to the world at that time was Nazism. The peoples of Europe, Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., suffered from occupation or bombing. The peoples of the U.S.S.R., guided by their elemental feelings in the face of mortal danger, had made themselves one with the Stalin régime. Abstract reason might reject such a conclusion but facts spoke for themselves. True, there was no longer any fulsome praise of Stalin, but the cry of 'Down with Stalin' had vanished as well; it was true that Stalin's commissars had lost their self-assurance but oppositionist groups, such as our Leningrad comrades, had also lost their fervour. Extreme positions had been abandoned. The opposed forces had joined hands; and this was a spontaneous act: the average Soviet outlook was: 'Side even with the Devil, to defeat Hitler.' Therefore today, opposition to Stalin was not only harmful to the international anti-Axis front but was also equivalent to antagonism to the Peoples of the U.S.S.R. We must also consider the speech of the British Premier, Churchill. By force of circumstances we had become the co-belligerents of the British (this I interpreted, as did most people in the Soviet Union, simply as *allies*). The anti-Axis coalition was led by Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin; any action against any one of them was an act against the whole anti-Nazi, anti-fascist union. I then quoted liberally from *Mein Kampf* with its plans of territorial expansion at the cost of the U.S.S.R.: Hitler was not just 'the enemy of

Stalin' but a dangerous imperialist. Our duty was clear: first to liquidate this danger, then to turn to other problems.

All the members of the council spoke in agreement, and a resolution was passed: Hitler was enemy number one; until that enemy was accounted for all anti-Stalinist activity was to cease.

Today the question is raised whether we were not mistaken, and fascist émigrés have not stinted their attacks upon me since I appeared in the West. And not only fascists. An American Russian language *anti-ist* paper, *Novoye Russkoye Slovo* (30th November, 1951), has even gone so far as to accuse me of committing a crime in not shooting Stalin. This is so ridiculous a charge that it is hardly worth answering. Whose flag, do these gentlemen think, would now wave over the Elysée Palace in Paris if we had then 'assassinated' Stalin? And were we to take a step which might have brought Britain, then engaged in a mortal struggle with Hitler, under Hitler's jackboot? Since then, hand on heart, I have learned to count Britain the freest and most democratic country in the world, and I have even more reason than in 1941 to reject such facile thinking.

The policy we adopted was, of course, forced upon us and it was intended to be temporary. Alas, subsequent developments prevented the renewal of our pre-war tactics: life in a centralised military State is less simple than outside 'liberators' ever seem to realise. One consideration which weighed with us was that no revolutionary conspiracy can hope ultimately to succeed unless it has enough men who are capable of acting as national leaders, and not only of administering but of doing so better than the administrators they replace. When we assessed our forces in war-time conditions we were compelled to recognise that they were far from adequate.

Certain Russian émigré circles have roundly declared that at the beginning of the war the peoples of the U.S.S.R. were in a mood of 'mass defeatism' and that when the German armies marched in there was 'wild enthusiasm'. I have always firmly asserted the contrary. I can only say that I never saw it. But mine was a lonely voice raised against this notion, and my attackers had the means of dissemination at their disposal.

What is meant by mass defeatism? The problem is worth examining. I take it to mean the action—whether organised or spontaneous—of whole bodies of men, whole classes, peoples, parties, armies or what have you, aimed at securing the defeat of their own Government and the triumph of a foreign power. Now, for such a movement to exist in the U.S.S.R., we should have needed not only the conviction that our own Government

was a tyranny but also the conviction that the Nazis came as liberators. True, there were plenty of people in the U.S.S.R. who had good, solid reasons for hating Stalin and his works. But were they ignorant of Hitler and *his* works? As a member of the supplementary body of lecturers for the Moscow Party Committee I had a fair opportunity of judging the extent of their general knowledge of Nazism. There cannot have been a single enterprise of any size in which, during the thirties, there had not been many lectures about National-Socialism and Hitler's delirious plans for enslaving the Slav world. The famous anti-Nazi film, *Professor Mamlock*, had been shown with enormous success in every cinema throughout the country.

No, there is not the slightest doubt that the peoples of the Soviet Union understood and hated Nazism. They knew about the Reichstag fire, about the Leipzig trial, the intrigues against Poland, the Nazi work in Spain, and the Berlin-Rome-Tokio 'anti-Comintern' Axis. They had not forgotten March the 7th, 1936, when Hitler marched into the Rhineland, or any of the steps that marked the rise of Nazism.

The idea that they could imagine Nazism to be better than Stalinism is fantastic, and the notion of 'mass defeatism'—of mass surrender to a 'liberating enemy' is pure moonshine. Between 'mass defeatism' and 'I do not want war' there is a great gulf. I too never wanted war, but I was not therefore a defeatist. Let me solemnly place on record that the assertion made by those émigrés who carry on their loathsome work under the aegis of certain self-appointed 'liberators', the assertion that the Red Army refused to fight and that whole divisions went over to the enemy, is a plain and vulgar lie. Is it not in any case sufficiently disproved by the defence of Leningrad, of Moscow, of Novorossisk, Sevastopol, Odessa and Stalingrad?

Of course we had our Quislings and our Haw-haws—I have been asked if the Vlassov movement was evidence of mass desertion. If their numbers seem large we must remember that out of hundreds and hundreds of divisions and a population of two hundred million the proportion is minute. The vast majority remained completely loyal. The very nature of the Vlassov forces goes to prove my point, for they were the most heterogeneous mob that ever took the field in modern times—a medley of honest prisoners and émigré adventurers and fascists, criminals and dregs of no known origin. Vlassov himself, according to the evidence, never contemplated treachery until his capture—he had fought the Germans cleverly and bravely and was indeed largely responsible for the successful

defence of Moscow; it was not until he was a prisoner that the so-called 'National Labour Union of Russian Solidarists' (whom Hitler's men mockingly described as 200 per cent Nazi) flocked round him and turned his head. The few genuine Soviet people who took service under him had been conditioned in Nazi camps—as were some forced recruits of other countries, by a diabolical technique of hunger training; and even among them there were some men who remained true to their ideals and who could swear that every bullet which they fired missed its mark.

No, what happened in the first weeks of the war was not mass defeatism but *mass defeat*. Our armies did not take to treachery, they were plainly, utterly *defeated, routed*. (Even then their flight was eastwards—away from, not towards, the enemy.) Materially the position could hardly have been worse: the Kremlin had failed miserably to equip the armies of defence as they should have been equipped. Psychologically, too, the Kremlin was responsible for much; after all the boasting and mass indoctrination about the Bolsheviks' invincibility, the disappointment was profound.

But against this must be set, not only the immense upsurge of patriotism in the face of danger, but the fact, surprising as it was to many of us, that we no longer stood alone. On the very day after the invasion, Churchill in his House of Commons speech had associated the 'Russian people' (as he in his old-fashioned way referred to us) with the British and the Western nations overrun by Hitler. I am not exaggerating when I say that this immediate, frank and positive gesture was one of which we stood in mortal need. The English say: 'A friend in need is a friend indeed,' and there is a Russian proverb: 'Friends are known in misfortune.' We in our misfortune now beheld a great and genuine friend. The Soviet peoples had shed many bitter tears, but now their tears were tears of joy. In my opinion history may well say that those few sentences of Churchill's played a part no less important than all the masses of material sent under lend-lease.

I lived and worked in what is called among us a *collective*, a team. When the news of Churchill's gesture came, it was as if new life had been infused into it. People seemed to wake from a half sleep. They rushed into the libraries and to their bookshelves to learn about the British whom we had thought of—how wrongly we now saw—as the 'accursed nation of shopkeepers'. The shock of this discovery was in itself a stimulus. But what revived us above all was the fact that now the Soviet Union, from being a country which was shunned, had become a country with an ally—and an ally of whom we could be proud. After the conquest

of the Baltic States, Poland and Bessarabia and the consequent expulsion of the U.S.S.R. from the League of Nations, we had been left with only one associate, Nazi Germany, an associate who was powerful but whom we hated and mistrusted on principle. When Hitler 'treacherously' attacked us we seemed to be completely alone. In those few hours between the outbreak of the war and Churchill's speech people of all ranks went through an age of desolation. But now, suddenly, the shifting sands under our feet had turned into firm rock.

I remember at the Academy Kolpakov, a middle-aged, non-Party civilian lecturer, arriving with a gleam in his eye and producing a bottle of vodka from his brief-case. He stood back against a brand-new MiG-3 and called on us to drink to the British King and Premier. For such words the day before he might have faced a firing squad, but now everybody drank the toast and another was laughingly proposed to 'Comrade the King of Great Britain'. A few hours later at a factory I found Viktor Diaghliev, a fitter, completing work on an MiG, singing at the top of his voice:

We don't fear the old grey wolf
We don't fear Hitler the wolf
Churchill's people are on our side.

That evening I managed to get home for a couple of hours (the Academy, the aircraft factories and the aerodromes were outside the urban area while our flat was in the heart of Moscow). I found one of our neighbours, a widow, Natalia Bochkariov, who greeted me with a broad smile. Had I heard of *Comrade* Churchill's speech? Did I know the English would be with us? Had I heard the news that the King of England had ordered a million aircraft and two million tanks to be sent to the U.S.S.R.? The great snow-ball of rumour was well on its way!

The following morning I had yet another piece of evidence of the startling effect of the British decision. My friend and colleague Pavlenko burst into my room and rang up the Political Department of the Academy. 'Comrade Babkin? Pavlenko speaking. Do you know the telephone number of the British Embassy? Why? Because we've got to say thank you to the British of course!' This was too much! My automatic reaction was to try to stop his call—did he want to find himself in prison? Pavlenko laughed. 'Prison? No, old man, those days are gone for ever. Now we're not alone. We've got the British nation with us.'

The Russians are an emotional, an ebullient people—operatic,

the English might think. At lunch at the Academy mess I asked Pavlenko why he thought the British had made their decision.

'I think only one thing: long live the British working class!'

'What about their agricultural workers?'

'Long live their agricultural workers!'

'And their intelligentsia?'

'Hurrah for the British intelligentsia!'

'But what about their shopkeepers?'

'I wish them jolly good business!'

'And their armed forces?'

Pavlenko could not contain himself; he leapt to his feet, stood to attention and cried: 'My humble respects to the British armed forces.'

A few of us laughed, but there was no indignation at Pavlenko's outrageous behaviour, and in a moment or two we even stopped laughing, for we felt that Pavlenko was right. The air we were breathing was suddenly different.

Colonel-Engineer Sitnov joined us at our table; he was anxious to talk about the news. Churchill's declaration was a turning-point of history. From now on the friendship between our two countries must never be broken. We would always have the same enemy; we must keep that enemy crushed between our giant forces. And what about capitalism and imperialism now? somebody asked. 'Oh!' cried Sitnov. 'For heaven's sake, stop talking about capitalism and imperialism. What does it mean? Let them live their own way. After all, I am told, they are better off than we are.'

Since then clouds have drifted back and it has again been dangerous to express pro-British feelings. But I am deeply convinced that those clouds are the work of ruling oligarchies, not the peoples of either side. The British and, later, the American peoples proved in human sacrifice their readiness to live in friendship with us, and I do not believe the Soviet peoples will ever forget this. The memory of our union in arms in the Second World War will be carried down the centuries, for what has been won by blood shed in common can never be annihilated by unclean propaganda. The Soviet peoples may have many faults, but not shortness of memory about what concerns their native soil. On the contrary, their memory is long; hence the readiness and vigour with which once again they fought back an imperialist invasion. With a like tenacity of mind they cling, in their heart of hearts, to the notion that the British are a friendly nation.

PANIC IN THE PARTY

THE WAR had hardly lasted a month when it became obvious that our defences had completely collapsed. There were rumours of all kinds. One day Pavlenko and I took a breather on the aerodrome where we were working, and discussed the speech of July 3rd in which Stalin had launched the idea of a people's militia. This was one of the signs of the new and vital importance which the people had assumed in the eyes of the Party. Beria had actually issued a fiery appeal to the peoples of the Caucasus urging them to take up arms in accordance with 'their glorious national traditions', and this notably un-Marxist watchword was suffered in silence by Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov, Voroshilov, Kalinin and the rest. Perhaps they recalled Clausewitz's dictum that a country which can make use of partisan warfare will always be superior to its opponent. We talked of the attitudes of the various bosses, and Pavlenko, who had never been political, suggested that it might be a good thing if Beria, or else Kaganovich, took over from Stalin; Malenkov neither of us trusted.

Just then Captain-Engineer Raizer, joining us, quietly told us of the rumour that the Academy was shortly to be evacuated 'to the East'. This was too much. Pavlenko insisted that if evacuation orders came he would not obey them.

He urged me to see Beria to find out the truth and, if such orders were intended, to beg him to cancel them. But by now it was impossible for me to get anywhere near Beria.

After a few days, however (about July 17th), I succeeded in getting an interview with Gardinashvili. From him I learned that the conflict between Beria and Stalin had sharpened. Acutely aware of the moral effect of the evacuation of Moscow, Beria was violently opposed to it. He also differed from Stalin on the method of arming the people: he maintained that the quickest way to do this would be through the regional NKVD, while Stalin and the rest of the Politbureau wanted it controlled by the local Party Secretaries and Committees. On both these cardinal issues, however, Beria yielded to Stalin's authority.

Gardinashvili also told me that Stalin had rejected Beria's plan for

the evacuation of the civilian population. An interesting feature of that plan was that most of the evacuees were to go to the Urals and Turkestan, hardly any to the Transcaucasian regions. The reason Beria gave for this was that Georgia and Armenia were frontier Republics and therefore unsuitable for the reception of evacuees. But we wondered if his real motive was not his anxiety to save his beloved Georgia from the hardship of receiving a large number of evacuated civilians. It began to look as if Beria was a 'national patriot' who was inclined to put the interests of his own native country before those of the other parts of the U.S.S.R. Not that Stalin's views were any better from our standpoint: Beria at least thought of the U.S.S.R. as an association of countries; Stalin conceived it as a single country in the old, Tsarist tradition.

(In passing, it is interesting to note the effect of this difference between Stalin's views and Beria's on their attitude to Turkey. Both regarded Turkey as a danger; but while Stalin would have liked to hasten a Soviet-Turkish conflict, Beria, knowing that Georgia would have borne the brunt of a war between Turkey and the Soviet Union, did his best to ward it off.)

A few days later Gardinashvili confirmed the news which Raizer had brought us. All the more important Moscow institutions and factories were to be evacuated. It seems that the decision was taken as early as the first week in July, only three weeks after the beginning of the war. At that time the air-raids had not yet become a serious danger, but the awful truth was that the Red Army in the field had virtually ceased to exist. Indeed, Beria was the only man in the Politbureau who doubted the power of the Germans very shortly to lay siege to Moscow.

How can I convey the appalling effect which the confirmation of the ominous rumour had on us? For twenty years our ears had rung with the slogans: 'the ideas of Marxism-Leninism are invincible', 'the Red Army is invincible', 'we are the most advanced and powerful social and State system in the world' and 'we shall only fight on the territory of our foes'—and it had taken less than a month to make nonsense of it. The evacuation order clearly meant that the position at the front, if there was any line which could be called a front, must be far worse even than we feared.

The score or so of us to whom the order was communicated by General Sokolov-Sokolionok slowly filed out. Pavlenko strode beside me in deadly silence, his head down, his hands behind his back, then he suddenly swung towards me and asked me if I had ever taken orders from a woman. I replied that the married man does not exist who hasn't. 'You b— fool,' he said, savagely, 'I am

not asking you about —. What I want to know is whether you would join me and go straight to Grizodubova?’

Grizodubova was a Soviet woman pilot, a Hero of the Soviet Union, who was said to be forming a regiment of light night bombers. Pavlenko’s suggestion was that to avoid the deep shame of being ‘evacuated’ to the rear, we should offer her our services. It seemed a splendid idea, and we went. But Grizodubova had no commission to offer us. The decision to allow her to form her regiment had been cancelled; she too was under orders to evacuate immediately.

The following morning—there had been a sharp enemy air-raid during the night—we took our courage in our hands and went straight to the Chief of Staff of the Academy, to ask his permission to remain in Moscow. In reply he threatened us with court martial and summary shooting for an attempt to sabotage a Government decision.

Our nerves were on edge. The whole country was in a state of extreme anxiety. About midnight, when we had completed the sorry work of entraining for evacuation, enemy aircraft attacked us. The engine-driver of our train, a man called Gordienko, came up at that moment. I remarked that Bukharin had warned us as far back as 1934 that Stalin’s policy would end in a Nazi invasion.

‘Bukharin?’ said Gordienko, thoughtfully. ‘Enemy of the People . . . Spy . . . Yes, yes, I recall it, Comrade Tokaev . . . We’ve none of us forgotten it.’ Then he added: ‘It’s bad enough, Hitler having the sky above Moscow, but he’ll never have Moscow itself.’ He spoke of our past history—Mongols, Swedes, French, Poles, Germans—all in turn had in the end been defeated. ‘Give us a bit of time, and we’ll show Hitler what’s what.’

Pavlenko, impulsive as ever, embraced Gordienko and kissed him on both cheeks. Yes, yes, we would show the Germans who was better man for man. The only good German was a dead one.

But even now Gordienko would not be shaken from his solid ground. ‘No, Comrade,’ he said, quietly, ‘that’s going too far. There are different sorts of Germans. You should say the only good fascist is a dead fascist.’

From that night on, all of European U.S.S.R., west of a line drawn from Archangel through Moscow to Rostov, was on wheels. The railways were choked. History has never known so enormous an evacuation, so great a collapse before an invading enemy. Millions of people, millions of heads of livestock, thousands of factories, tens of thousands of collective farm teams with their equipment, high schools and universities, academies, ministries and other public institutions, newspaper offices, publishing houses, hospitals,

maternity homes, museums and stores, had suddenly all been set in motion eastwards, to the Volga, beyond the Urals, to Siberia, to Turkestan.

And among them was the great Zhukovsky Academy and, as one of its staff, myself, waiting beside a train in the night, outside Moscow, burning with indignation and impotent anger. We were halted at a junction. We moved forward again, slowly. There was unspeakable confusion. Only one track was left open for movement from east to west—for armies and supplies with which to stop the invaders. The other tracks were cluttered with trains awaiting their turn. Overhead circled enemy bombers. Flares shed their lurid light, tracer bullets whistled through the air. An attack suddenly concentrated on us. The brakes brought the long train to a clashing, jerky halt. The line ahead was destroyed. Panic began. I saw figures leaping from the train in the dark, running wildly. It was too dark to know who they were. I tried to get them to come back, but they paid no attention to my shouting, disregarding the air-raid drill which they should have known by heart. In my anger I fired at their heels to warn them. Luckily I hit nobody. I tried to find Commissar Illarionov, to help me.

Alas, that brave commissar was one of those who had run away. The man who for years had had the task of seeing to it that we lived up to the level of conduct which was expected of us, had jumped into what looked like a trench—it was a midden. I found him when the raid was over. I think he mistook some of the squelching filth on his uniform for blood. I nearly shot him on the spot, but by now my blood had cooled, and I controlled myself. There followed a ludicrous dialogue between Illarionov, still in the hole and trying to convince me that the enemy had been aiming at him, and myself dressing him down (which he humbly accepted) and magnanimously letting him get out of his pit.

Day was beginning to break. We were shunted back. Once again I stood beside Gordienko in the cab of the engine; I remarked that this was a war of lightning speeds; we too, I said, needed to act swiftly. But again I was to hear better common sense from a simple engine-driver.

'I'm not so sure,' he said; 'I can't prove my words, it's only my feeling, but if you ask me, the German pressure will ease up soon . . . and then the Englishman will begin to weigh in . . .'

With millions of such steady heads and imperturbable hearts, millions of such calm, wise, simple men to win the war for them, perhaps the task of Stalin and his oligarchy was not, after all, going to be as impossible as I had thought.

The congestion on the railways was fantastic, but not nearly so fantastic as what we had to face as soon as we had left the urban ring and come out on the main Moscow-Vladivostok railway: it was still a one-track railway in that direction. During the second five-year plan we had certainly built many railways, and our propagandists had assured us that the U.S.S.R. had become 'a powerful railway country', but the hard fact was that we had not enough railways. As a result every railway station from Moscow to Kazan was so full of trains awaiting their turn that it is a miracle that they ever did move out again.

The train under my charge contained a remarkable collection of men—academicians, generals, professors, lecturers, candidates and doctors of sciences, officers of all ranks—as well as scientific research records, and the Academy treasury and various other valuables.¹ Its code name was Military Personnel Train No. 23. Stations on our route were informed of its passage, and it was almost invariably given priority. At first this pleased me, but in time I discovered the reverse of the medal. At Arzamas station some fifteen *Nachalniks* were competing for priority. The military transport officer, following instructions from above, gave it to my train.

The officer in charge of Train No. 119, a captain in artillery uniform, was nearly in tears. *His* train had come from the front line, and was packed with wounded men in urgent need of treatment. They were drawn up alongside us and the sound of their groans was heartrending; many were dying. Consequently I renounced my priority in favour of Train 119. The captain embraced me, then raced from the stationmaster's office and got moving.

But many of my passengers were not at all pleased. There were mumbles of '*provocateur*' and some even threatened to lay a Party charge against me when we reached our destination. The loudest-mouthed of all was Illarionov. As deputy *Nachalnik* for political matters, but my senior in rank, he felt in a position to resume his former hectoring manner; after all, danger was already well behind us. Why had I let the other train through? Because it was full of wounded, was my simple answer.

Many will scarcely believe me when I say that his reply was to shout that our train was 'full of generals and other senior officers'. Who, did I think, was the more important, the ordinary Red Army men or *generals*? I told him that the sufferings of men who were actually fighting for our native land were far more important to me than the special passes of the VIP's, and I reminded him that

¹ It is customary in the U.S.S.R. to keep considerable funds in ready cash.

I was the officer commanding the train. He ordered me to be silent and declared that he was removing me from my post. Before I could reply, to my dismay, there was Pavlenko thrusting his face forward, and I trembled for what my temperamental friend might do. 'You miserable coward!' shouted Pavlenko. 'You are a disgrace to the Red Army uniform.' Who had given him any right to speak to me like that—had he forgotten what he had done during the air-raid?

Once again Illarionov turned, made off at high speed, and did not show himself again. Nevertheless, we could not help being aware of a hostile mutter all round us, and during the next halt we both approached Illarionov and tried to explain away our hot tempers. In short, we apologised to the miserable creature. He, for his part, requested us not to say anything more about the air-raid. It so happened that soon after this, we were held up at Sarapul. After a ten-hour wait, Illarionov asked to speak to the military transport officer. For tactical reasons, I consented; the covey of generals moved on, the trainload of wounded took their place on the waiting-list.

Our secret destination was Sverdlovsk beyond the Urals, where the excellent premises of the Urals Infantry College and the hostels of the Urals Kirov Industrial Polytechnical Institute had been placed at our disposal. Train No. 23 came to a final halt in the sidings behind the Institute. Unloading had only just begun when a railway official came up and told us that the track we were on was used for the wounded, the next train of wounded men was expected in an hour, so would we please hurry. Illarionov heard this, and flew into a rage. It was insufferable, he cried, to have a mere railway clerk instructing a transport of generals and other high-rankers. The railway official replied, politely but firmly, that it was *wounded* men he was expecting on this track.

'Can't you see, my good man,' cried Illarionov, 'that a train of colonels and generals has already arrived? Be off with you, and don't meddle in business which does not concern you.'

'So that,' said the railway official, 'is Stalinist care for the defenders of the fatherland!'

I took the railway official aside and quietly told him that we would clear the line as soon as possible; he would gain nothing, I said, by arguing with Colonel Illarionov, who was becoming more and more of a hero as we moved away from the Germans. The Sverdlovskian nodded slowly. He understood. What was the real situation at the front? he asked; how was it that this fascism which, we had been told, was a compound of ignorance and primitiveness,

had so soon driven us to the Urals? I asked him what he thought himself. He replied that it was obvious that we were a hundred times weaker than we had thought. There was a weak spot in our organism. Was that not understandable, if it was built on officers like that commissar? We had heard so much about the liquidation of classes, yet a train of healthy generals had priority over the wounded.

Yes, it was clear that everywhere there were men who now saw through the falsity of Stalinism. The diagnosis was becoming general. But what of the treatment they prescribed? This was already taking the form of a ready-made formula. 'No matter, as soon as we've finished this war, there'll be a change for the better.' I used that formula now. To my surprise, the Sverdlovsk railway official had a different view; he was extremely pessimistic. If Hitler won, he said, it would be bad. But in one way it would be still worse if he didn't. Millions of decent ordinary folk would have been killed, but this caste of generals and the like would be almost untouched. I stared at him. 'Caste differentiation will merely be intensified,' he said, coldly.

At that moment the train of wounded drew up, only a hundred yards away. A medical service major, pistol in hand, came striding over, calling for the *Nachalnik* of Train 23. I stepped forward.

'Nonsense!' he cried. 'I saw the fellow at Sarapul. He is a commissar with the rank of colonel . . . An absolute swine . . . Where is the man?'

I saw before me a man who had been through battle and whose standards of authority had been fundamentally changed—he was ready to shout at commissar colonels. Although my train was still half full of luggage I at once ordered it to be shunted to one side. And Illarionov again made himself inconspicuous.

The reactions of this major were interesting. When all this was over, and we were snug in my small room in the students' hostel, we had a heart to heart talk. He was a Party member who had passed out of the Military Medical Academy in 1937. Emelianov was his name. The picture of the front which he gave me was disturbing. Demoralisation was complete. A handful of German tanks was sufficient to rout a whole Red Army division. Our men were in flight, abandoning arms, ammunition, stores. The greater part of our war equipment was rapidly falling into enemy hands.

This, he insisted, was the general picture; the exceptions occurred only where the command—military and political, ordinary officers and commissars—did not fail. He cited a tank battle in the Porkhovsky Forest region, where a Soviet tank unit, though outnum-

bered, fought a German tank unit to the very end; and another epic engagement in Belorussia, where a division of infantry, amid the general panic, fought till the field was littered with dead and mutilated bodies. Nothing could break its will, not even a charge by enemy tanks; men battled with death itself; a soldier, with an inches-wide hole torn through him by a shell, fought off death for five minutes. Another, from whose body arm and shoulder had been torn, desperately tried to put back his severed limb; *where the command did not fail* the will to fight on was indomitable.

The conclusion was clear: resistance was possible; man for man the Nazis were not superior. The fault lay in our organisation and our officers' corps. How was it that a country with a score of giant military academies had almost no good officers? Where were the men who had been trained in the past twenty years?

Of course, we knew the answer: the flower of the Soviet officers' corps had been annihilated before the battle began, either shot or locked behind the barbed-wire of Yezhov's labour camps on the instructions of the Politbureau. So large-scale a military collapse could not be a chance affair.

'Do you understand, Comrade Tokaev?'—Emelianov was instructing me, not I him—'it is not the Red Army soldier who is to be blamed for our defeats, but Comrade Stalin, Comrade Voroshilov, Comrades Molotov, Kaganovich, Khrushchev, Kalinin, Zhdanov, Malenkov, Vosnesensky and the rest of them.'

'Are the men saying this at the front?' I asked.

'Junior officers talk quite openly about it.'

'And so what is to be done?'

'Unfortunately, nothing at present. We must defeat the enemy first; after that we can put the question to Stalin and his men.'

Before we could think of defeating the enemy, we needed to withdraw, to reassemble our forces, to gather new strength. Counter blows were unthinkable without such recuperation, and such recuperation would have been unthinkable without the astonishing sturdiness and energy of the population of the Urals. Sverdlovsk, the principal town of this great mining and industrial area, was so filled with evacuees that it was soon three times as large as it had been. Every habitable room was crammed with tenants. The crowding was indescribable, but to my knowledge the people of Sverdlovsk never complained.

The Uralian is tough beyond measure. The people are born engineers and remarkably stubborn and cool-headed under strain. The unruffled firmness with which the station official dealt with Illarionov was typical of these people. No pressure from above

was required to get space for emergency hospitals or quarters for evacuees. Not only was this offered readily, but the people of Sverdlovsk seemed always a step ahead of what was needed. The watchword, 'all for the front, all for victory', seemed to be their own spontaneous thought. They gave up everything, provided everything. The schoolgirls took on the nursing of the wounded under terribly hard conditions and their work was magnificent. If there was panic in Moscow and at the front, here there were firmness and a faith in victory which more than counter-balanced it.

Physically the Urals are a remarkable region—a mountain range reaching over 6,000 feet and spreading over a thousand miles, rich in coal, lead, wolfram, molybdenum, mercury, copper, antimony and manganese. Between the Urals and the Volga is an oil-bearing region, and there are vast resources of water power and also of turf. Much of this wealth had remained unexploited until the Second World War, but the pressure of war needs and the fact that the principal Soviet research institutes were moved to this district, soon made a difference. The railways have now been developed better than in many western areas and today the Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Combine is famous throughout the U.S.S.R., and is one of the leading modern industrial centres of the world.

In the nerve-centre of this new world, Sverdlovsk, I now found a new home-town. My quarters were at 11, Pushkin Street, next to the headquarters of the Urals Provincial Party Committee. Here the Ponomarenkos—husband, wife and sixteen-year-old daughter—were cramped into one room about twelve by fourteen feet in area. A system of screens divided it into four parts. In one slept the husband and wife, in another their daughter Galia, in a third Tokaev; the fourth quarter was the living-room of our joint household. Imagine a sitting-room of such dimensions that it contained 'comfortably' no more than two persons, and believe me when I say that in spite of this I never once heard a word of complaint from the Ponomarenkos; by this the temper of the time and of the people of the Urals may be judged. They shared everything with me. In the next room to ours lived a couple with a three-year-old son and a daughter of six. On them was quartered a Leningrad woman, also with a little boy. And when the children failed to get on together, instead of complaining, the Sverdlovians simply packed off their boy to Granny in a nearby village.

We Caucasians are a little inclined to boast of the beauties of our homeland. Ponomarenko noticed my weakness. 'Yes, I have seen the Caucasus,' he said, 'and it certainly is wonderful, but I cannot say I like your Moscow.'

'But have you been to Moscow, Comrade Ponomarenko?' I asked him.

'Moscow? Heaven forbid!' he cried. 'There is something far-off and foreign, hypocritical too, about Moscow. Now, I like Kiev, and Kharkov, and Nikolayev, and Kherson, and Leningrad, not to speak of Sverdlovsk. But no, I don't like Moscow.'

'But what harm has Moscow done you?'

'You'd much better ask what good it has ever done. Who is to blame for our present misery but Moscow? Who made friends with Ribbentrop? Moscow. Who shot the best men we ever had? Moscow! Whose fault is it that the Red Army has not sufficient good officers? Moscow's, of course.'

It might seem that I colour Ponomarenko's thoughts with my own. But this is not so; nor was he alone in his opinion of Moscow and of the Moscovites. It was generally said that among the evacuees the best-behaved were those from Leningrad, the worst those from Moscow, who were arrogant and lacking in feeling for others.

The great flight eastwards had made of Sverdlovsk a concentration of Soviet types. I welcomed the presence of Leningrad folk, and soon made their acquaintance as well as meeting several old friends. Most of them were quartered in some wooden barracks near the Institute in which I worked. I have nowhere in the West seen housing which touched this district in squalor. The filth and the stench in the summer were amazing. Yet there were very few complaints.

MOSCOW IN JEOPARDY

AT THE end of August the Academy received grim orders from Stalin: we were to prepare for the worst and make plans to apply the scorched earth policy. A few days earlier, Gardinashvili had informed me that fresh Axis forces were moving up. The final attack on Moscow was to be expected shortly, and the Academy proceeded to form a special volunteer corps, to wage the last partisan action inside Moscow.

We were all assembled in the huge mess-room of the Urals Infantry College, many hundreds of us. Faces were grim. The C. in C. of the Academy called for volunteers but said that the older people would not be accepted. Pavlenko was the first to volunteer; I followed him, together with a couple of dozen others. There were at the most thirty of us, almost all scientists, and not one amongst us was a commissar. There was a comical moment when Pavlenko suggested that Illarionov should be made our commissar and Illarionov talked about his failing health. (When it was all over this warrior was decorated with the Defence of Moscow Medal.)

We immediately returned to Moscow by air. It was a desperate culmination to strange weeks of doubts and expectations, of bright hopes even. For at the end of July we had realised that we possessed an unexpected ally—the unbelievable stupidity of the Führer—or was it perhaps the constitutional German love of parades! When they came within striking distance of Moscow the Nazis halted and made lengthy preparations to enter Moscow and Leningrad in fine style, with smartened-up equipment and uniforms in perfect order.

Though severe trials were to follow, I do not think it is too much to call this German halt the turning-point of the war. We made use of it to test the Katiusha. This was Kostikov's multiple-rocket gun which proved to be one of our most telling weapons. (Before the war A. G. Kostikov had spent some time in prison, partly because his talk of multiple rockets had struck the commissars as 'delirious nonsense, amounting to sabotage'.) The rocket had a long history as a weapon: it was in the 11th century that Europe first heard of its use by the Chinese; in 1249 the Arabs used it in the siege of

Damietta, and in 1547 Reinhardt Solem tried to equip rockets with wings. In 1668 Christopher Heisler was testing rockets which weighed nearly a hundredweight. Colonel Congreve used them in Copenhagen in 1807, the Russians used them against the strongholds of my own ancestors at the beginning of the 19th century, and in 1846 American engineers succeeded in spinning rockets on their axis to give them stability in flight. Yet in recent times they had been neglected in practice in our country until Kostikov's invention.

The trial was made in the Yartsevo Yelna region. The Nazis were quietly bathing in a setting of bucolic peace, when a Soviet unit suddenly advanced upon them and, after a strange multiple hissing and whining, the air was choked with a devastating rain of shrapnel. After this, immediate orders were given to mass-produce the Katiusha and fit it to everything on wheels from tanks to baggage wagons. But it was a long way from the first trial to the mass application of the rocket and, before this was achieved, Moscow nearly fell.

The scorched earth corps was carefully organised. I was myself specially examined and instructed by Colonel Mitnitsky. We were issued poison to use in case of capture. The buildings to destroy were listed and we were given detailed orders as to how we were to go about destroying them. All that we had built up over the years, priceless equipment, all this was to be annihilated if the Nazis entered Moscow. I had spent years fighting bureaucracy to make the experimental laboratory what it was: now I was to be instrumental in destroying it. I also found it unspeakably repellent to be charged with the work of poisoning food stores. But if this were necessary for the defence of our country it would have to be done. There was a savage logic in the order and we understood it. But our soul revolted against the fact that we were driven to consider such measures.

Inevitably, being in Moscow and on such an errand, my mind turned yet again to the question of what, if anything, could be done against the Stalin régime which we blamed for our misfortunes. The answer, in principle, had been given at our leaders' conference of July 5th. Yet did the decision to wait till we had dealt with the external enemy mean doing nothing? Neither Comrade X nor Belinsky was in Moscow, but Yeryomenko and Gardinashvili met me at my flat to consider every eventuality.

One thing was made clear by Gardinashvili's information: Beria, whom we had had hopes of using as a new temporary leader, could not be relied on. A man of superhuman energy, for weeks he had been using up his strength on the thousand details of security

defence organisation, such as the pursuit and liquidation of foreign agents and the preparation of terrorist activities against the enemy. Gardinashvili said that at times Beria seemed to be demented. Under the stress of his work he had become intolerant, brutal towards his subordinates, suspicious of everyone and so antagonistic towards Molotov and Voroshilov that he had lost all sense of proportion. Reluctantly we recognised that we could evidently not count on Beria in any show-down.

The situation was indeed remarkable. In one sense the authority of Stalin had fallen to its lowest level, yet in another sense he was untouchable. I recall a conversation which Gardinashvili and I had, at about that time, with Colonel Kovalchuk and Major Vronsky, neither of whom had anything to do with our conspiracies and who both talked to us, presumably, as they would have talked to anyone. Kovalchuk said that it wouldn't be at all difficult to overthrow the Soviet Government and that it was a tragedy that this had to be ruled out. The masses had lost respect for their rulers, but they knew they couldn't swap horses in midstream. Nor would it be possible in war-time to form a new and satisfactory government quickly enough. The odd thing was that now Party members criticised the Kremlin more violently than did those who were outside the Party, but this meant that the very men who might have done something felt obliged to tie their own hands.

Our conversation was the more extraordinary because Vronsky held a post in the Central Party Offices. He showed neither surprise nor indignation at Kovalchuk's words. Most people in the Central Offices, he said, were extremely pessimistic, but they regarded Stalin as a unifying symbol in the face of the external enemy. The question they were asking themselves was: had he sufficient stature for that rôle? The Politbureau were sure he had, and so were most of the leading Party officials. Stalin's cold power of reasoning, said Vronsky, and his unshakable optimism, together with his mercilessness, might now prove of such value that we ought to forget his crimes.

With this in mind, he told us, the Central Committee of the Party had been carrying out an enquiry into Stalin's prestige with the masses. (Such public opinion polls were always going on, but recently they had been directed to this particular subject.) The conclusion they came to was that though Stalin was still hated for his savage collectivisation measures and for annihilating the middle peasantry and the dissident Communists, nevertheless, *in all strata*, people thought that at the moment he alone could lead them.

Kovalchuk said that this was also the view generally held in the Commissariat of Defence. With his twenty years' experience at the head of the Party and the Government, Stalin knew the affairs of the country better than anyone else. Little as we might like it, the country needed such a man now more than at any time before the war.

I caught Gardinashvili's eye. We were both thinking of the similarity between this view and those which we had all expressed at our conference on July 5th. Tempting though it was to stage a *coup d'état* at a moment when it might succeed, we knew that it would be wrong, and now our opinion was confirmed by men who had no connection whatever with our underground movement.

The most powerful man next to Stalin, Vronsky added, was undoubtedly Beria. I asked him about the disagreements within the Politbureau. He confirmed the rumours we had heard, in particular that Beria strongly criticised Molotov's foreign policy. But both Molotov and Stalin were determined to avoid a show-down.

Another interesting example of the attitude of prominent personalities was given me by Colonel (as he was then) Gorchakov. He and his young wife, Raïssa, had asked me in for a drink. He said that it was years since he had had a chance to relax, but now that the 'damn Germans with their air-raids' sent a man to cover, he could put his feet up. He was already soaked in drink and I could see the expression of disgust on Raïssa's face. She was better educated than her husband, for he had only been through a series of Party courses some fifteen years earlier, while she had recently taken a diploma at one of Moscow's university-level colleges. Finally, as he was pressing vodka on me, she lost her patience with him and burst out: 'All you think of is that bottle. I can't imagine what the Government is paying you for. If I were Stalin, I'd send you for a fortnight's cure to steam your brain clean.'

'Listen to that!' cried Gorchakov. 'It's always like this. She's made criticising her husband a profession.'

But Raïssa went on: 'Do you know,' she turned to me, 'he has made up his mind to scuttle away to the rear. In his miserable little heart he has already given up Moscow to the Germans. He already sees himself cosily tucked away in Siberia or Mongolia, looking for another cushy job.'

With tears in her eyes she abruptly left us. I turned to Gorchakov. Was it true that he regarded Moscow as lost, I asked.

'Partly true.'

'Sounds a rotten thing to say, Comrade Colonel.'

'Then,' said Gorchakov, 'my respected boss, Malenkov, is a scoundrel too—he's quite sure Moscow is impossible to defend.'

'How do you know Comrade Malenkov thinks that?'

'I got it direct from his secretaries . . . If you ask me, there's no sense in trying to fool the nation any longer; the sooner we admit we can't hold back the enemy, the better.'

I told him that we *could* hold back the enemy, we had the necessary forces in the common people, particularly in the workers of Moscow.

'Come off it, Tokaev,' said Gorchakov, 'this isn't a Party assembly . . . If you knew the squabbling that's going on in the Kremlin, you'd agree with me . . . Besides, most of the Kremlin crowd have already skedaddled east, and half the Politbureau already wants open recognition that Moscow's done for, and the other half aren't agreed, while Stalin and Molotov won't come down on one side or the other . . . Shcherbakov and Beria would like to fight on, but there is no counting on Beria—all he's interested in is Georgia, not Russia.¹ So long as the others mean to carry on, he'll play his part, but he's ready at any moment to wash his hands of it all.'

Gorchakov, orthodox among the orthodox, top-level functionary of the Military Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, stoked his brain with another dose of vodka and began to babble his real views. 'What, after all, have I got to fight for? Once upon a time we had a revolution with ideas, with ideals, but that is all gone now. Didn't we make allies of the fascists in 1939? Didn't we shoot Tukhachevsky and all the others? We once dreamt of socialism, but that's a joke now. Why should I fight for Stalin? Is he so much better than Hitler? I tell you straight, if I could be sure the Germans wouldn't take it out of me for belonging to the Party and serving in the Central Committee, I wouldn't hesitate to wait for them in Moscow.'

It was a disturbing picture, even for one who had hated Stalinism and had known the falsity of its façade for as long a time as I had. This man, too, in quite a different way, was disillusioned with the Soviet system.

At this moment Raïssa came back and suggested that I should go up with her to the roof. I saw what I had already seen on the roofs of other Moscow buildings: Moscow's fire-watching was left to the women. Men like Gorchakov lounged in their flats or went down to the air-raid shelters while their wives, armed with ordinary shovels or anything else that came to hand, dealt with incendiaries.

¹ Gorchakov actually said *Russia*, i.e. the 'racial' Russia, *not* the U.S.S.R.

The Gorchakovs lived in the People's Commissariat of Defence House at Chistye Prudy and from the roof I saw a display of horrible magnificence. An air-raid was on, and all the anti-aircraft artillery was in action. Fragments of falling shrapnel sounded a broken tattoo on the sheet-iron roofs. A brilliant flare hung over the Kremlin. A bomb burst a hundred yards away and shook the eight-floor building under us. A piece of metal scraped my head and I had to go down and let Raïssa bandage me up. Gorchakov laughed at me: hadn't he told me it was silly to try to defend the city? It would have been my own fault if I had been killed. I returned his taunts with interest. He was one of those, I said, to whom the people owed its plight; all he had ever been interested in was his rank and his decorations. His reply was characteristic: 'If it comes to that, my good fellow, I'm an officer and a Party member. What the hell do the people matter to me? I'm responsible to the Army and the Party.' I asked him if he had always been so paltry. He boasted that he was a man of consequence, loyal and efficient. 'Malenkov knows . . .' I said I didn't envy Malenkov for having such a coward under his command. This was too much even for him. He snatched at Raïssa's hand just as she tied the bandage. She gave him a resounding box on the ear. For a moment this sobered him.

Raïssa went back to the roof and I tried to take leave of Gorchakov. But he held out a glass of vodka to me and said, frowning:

'Come on, drink up.'

'I don't drink vodka.'

'All right, I won't insist. But we'd better get things straight. You'd better keep away from here. I don't like you.'

'I don't like you, Colonel.'

'Then why d'you come here?'

'I came on the invitation of Raïssa. She and I have been friends for many years.'

'Only friends?'

'Don't be a fool.'

'Do you mean to tell me there is nothing more than friendship between you?'

'I never knew you were quite such a fool,' I said, and left him.

Two days later a private car drove into the Academy yard and Gorchakov came into the hangar where I was lecturing. When I had finished, he tucked his arm into mine and said he had come to apologise for his stupid insinuations. Of course there was nothing between me and Raïssa. Our quarrel had upset her very much. Would I call at their flat just to show her that we were still

friends? 'She looks on you as a brother. She says she won't leave Moscow until you've called.'

'What about you, Comrade Colonel?' I asked.

He fumbled for words. There were no orders to leave, so how could he go? Comrade Shcherbakov was dealing ruthlessly with the faint-hearted. Would I please forget what he had said? He, Gorchakov, was a Russian, and no Russian ever uttered a word in favour of the Germans. And when I reminded him of what he had said: 'Come, come,' he pleaded, 'we've just agreed to forget all that.'

Gorchakov was a typical leading Party officer, not a man, a mere weather-cock. The strains of war found them out. The moment they lacked clear instructions, there was no morale left in them, vodka took its place. The striking thing was that their wives were generally quite unlike them. On the whole, Soviet women, even in the top levels of society, were remarkable for the stability of their ethics and the purity of their patriotism.

That was not the end of the story. The assault on Moscow started on October 3rd. On the night of the 8th Gorchakov and Raïssa came to see me. He was in charge of the final evacuation of State and Party archives and he had felt it his duty to come and bid me farewell before he left Moscow. Raïssa hastily explained that he was acting under orders in leaving the capital. I told her that I still believed that Moscow could be defended. She embraced me with tears in her eyes. Then Gorchakov stepped forward; he was obviously moved.

'It is only now,' he said jerkily, 'that I have really come to understand you, Tokaev. Forgive me, I am a silly old fool, but I can see that you are a real man, and I am proud that Raïssa should have such a friend.'

'Isn't he your friend too?' cried Raïssa impulsively. 'Tell him honestly what you think of him.' But he couldn't find the words. Instead, he pressed me to him and clapped me on the shoulder. His eyes were full of tears as he turned to his car. From my finger dangled the key of their flat which they had entrusted to me. I watched the car till it was out of sight.

There is a Russian saying that you don't know a Russian's heart till you have drunk a bottle of vodka with him; it seems to me even more true that you do not know a Russian till you have quarrelled with him over a woman or over politics. Gorchakov was a spineless bureaucratic boss, yet in a crisis even he revealed that special kind of direct humanity which is called the 'Russian soul'. He actually rang me up later that night, from a station outside

Moscow, once again to say good-bye and to beg me to take care of myself. After being good friends during the war we were to meet again in 1947; but of that later.

On October 10th, with the German offensive mounting in strength hourly, there began the 'secret' evacuation of the families of the élite. The following day the State Bank was moved. To avoid traffic jams on the road, this was done by underground from a nearby station. Lenin's embalmed body was buried in a secret place nearby. Stalin and his men withdrew into deep shelters; a special underground train at a special siding was permanently ready to remove them if necessary.

Despite all the secrecy the air was full of rumours. I myself heard from 'eye-witnesses' that a squadron of German tanks had entered central Moscow; that a regiment had marched into the town from the north-west; and that Aircraft Factory No. 22 had been destroyed—though none of this was true. Moscow is a great city for rumours; this in a crisis is one of its greatest dangers because people there are conditioned to learning everything from official sources: the moment the official voice is silent, there is a vacuum into which all sorts of rumours are sucked, and the masses will believe anything.

The weather was foul; fine sleet drifted down; the streets were cold and greasy with mud. We were all exhausted. In accordance with orders, I had grown a beard and was dressed like a bandit. Now in the middle of an air-raid I had an astonishing experience. The day before, an old pilot friend of mine had rung me up to ask me to go and see his wife who was expecting a child. It was two in the morning before I had a moment to get to her. Bombs were bursting on all sides. I found Masha half sitting on a divan, a huge feather bed over her swollen belly to protect her unborn child from the explosions. She was too anxious about Moscow, she said, to stay in bed. She had heard the Nazis were in the city; by a previous arrangement with Stalin, parachutists had landed in the Kremlin, and the terms of surrender were about to be signed. The origin of this rumour was not hard to find: the Kremlin was constantly lit by flares, yet not a single bomb had dropped on it; the people had concluded that the flares were meant to guide parachutists.

In the middle of all this Masha's labour pains began. There was no assistance to be got from anywhere. How puny and ignorant I felt! I had thought that as a scientist I knew a little of everything. What a mistake! I suspect that most of us academic men

are like that—infants when it comes to the great and simple processes of life. We even become husbands and fathers without a glimmering of knowledge about the physical processes of childbirth.

Masha's confinement seemed to me a fantastic agony. It was a revelation to me that women suffer so much. At the same time the whole business that night was incredibly comic, cinema stuff. Masha at first was overcome with shyness, unwilling—or unable—to tell me what to do. I tore at the pages of an encyclopaedia. Alas, encyclopaedias are poor practical guides; then Masha screwed up her courage to tell me to boil water, roll up my shirt sleeves, scrub my hands and arms and do—those most obvious things which common sense dictated.

All's well that ends well. For the first—and so far the only—time in my life, I helped at the birth of a magnificent boy. When, soon after, the all-clear was sounded and I could fetch a neighbour, a woman who had had two children and was therefore more experienced than either Masha or myself, I was told with horror that I had done all the wrong things. But the fact remains that the result was satisfactory, and I am proud to this day of having helped to bring a man into the world. Piotr, the father, was able to get home as day broke, and he and Masha at once decided to name the boy Grigori. Alas, my little friend was orphaned before he could even say 'Daddy'; Piotr was shot down in 1942. Masha asked me to be young Grigori's guardian. I agreed, rashly it seems, for six years later I too was obliged to leave him.

On October the 14th I was at home, sorting my personal papers to be ready for the worst. My room was crowded with women from the neighbouring flats. We lived at 24 Furmanny Pereulok, in an enormous building which was now mainly occupied by the wives and children of the less important tenants (the families of the top-level men had been evacuated). Ours was a hospitable household, and my own prestige stood high with the neighbours—with the grown-ups because I was young to be at the head of a great scientific institution, and with the children on account of my motor-cycle on which many of them had had rides. The night before I had received a visit from Pakhom, the porter and handyman, a figure from the past; when I told him not to believe the rumours about German tanks in Moscow and assured him solemnly that the capital would be defended, he had spread my message far and wide. As a result there were more people in the flat than usual. The radio was turned on full blast, and I had emptied the provision cupboard: my visitors were having a feast. Then the message I expected came:

the C.O. of our annihilation battalion summoned me urgently; he had 'very disturbing news' which could not be given over the telephone. I somehow got the impression that a parachute regiment had come down in the city. It was zero hour for me.

I said good-bye to my most precious possession, my books, and even fastened a notice in German on my door, calling on the Nazis, if they were not mediaeval barbarians, to keep their hands off my library, 'assembled with great difficulty'. One does not speak of human beings and of things in the same breath—but in the material world they were my all: early editions of Pascal, Stokes, Poincaré, Lyapunov, Zhukovsky, Prandtl, Lanchester, Eddington, Morelli; and of course Lazare Carnot's *Theory of Infinitely Small Quantities*, for I had not felt I was a mathematician at all until I possessed a first edition of that great pioneer of mathematical thought. I wondered too what the Germans, if they came, would think on finding on my shelves even last month's numbers of such publications as their own *Flugsport*, *Luftwissen* and *Luftfahrtforschung*.

I was to keep my library till the end of 1947; then I was forced to leave my native land and I left behind me, not only my ageing mother and my other relatives, but also this most precious part of me.

Sadovo-Chernogorskaya Street, near The Earthworks, was packed with people. Normally this is one of the main arteries of the smart district of Moscow; London has no street to compare with it in width or elegance. Now it was one uninterrupted mass of humanity on the trek. Mass evacuation had begun. Buses were not functioning in this quarter and there was no other wheeled transport to be seen except handcars, some of them home-made from packing cases. It was amazing to see thousands of women dressed in normal European fashion taking to this ancient Far Eastern form of transport, pushing their handcars and carrying their children strapped on to their backs. The slowly-moving crowd was laden with shapeless bundles; some carried their household goods or dragged them in their barrows. Their faces were grimly set; I don't think many of them had the vaguest notion where they were going, except that it was to the East, away from the oncoming enemy. It never entered my head that slanderers in the Western world would invent the story which has been circulated since the war, that the people of Moscow welcomed the Nazi armies.

I managed to press my way through to the Kursk Underground Station, my only way of getting to my work, but I found the entrance closed to the public; the Underground was still busy with the transport of the staff and archives of the Central Government Offices.

With great difficulty I crossed the Kursk Square to the main building of the railway station. One T.N.T. bomb on the huge square crammed with people and goods, and the damage would have been catastrophic, but the weather did not favour the Luftwaffe.

Part of the station had been turned into a refuge for the high command. One waiting-room was occupied by the NKVD, another by the Army and the Navy, a third by the Ministry of Justice; all the élite of the capital was there, top-ranking officers and officials with their families, waiting for their special trains. Out in the street clustered the working masses in the sleet and rain, waiting for something undefined.

At the moment I was not one of the élite; I was not fleeing from Moscow, I was one of those who had elected to stay where I belonged and to defend the capital. As a result, though I had work to do at one of the aircraft factories, I could get no transport. I rang up the management and decided to use the time until arrangements could be made by calling on Boris Borisovich, a disabled general who worked at the Ministry of Defence and who was one of my underground friends. On the way to him I met Burtzev, an engineer and Party member with whom I had studied years before. He could hardly recognise me and he stared in astonishment at my get-up. I was dressed in a short, thick tunic with an astrakhan collar; on one hip I carried an automatic with plenty of ammunition, on the other a tightly packed haversack; all my pockets were bulging and from under my tunic stuck a vicious-looking cutlass.

Burtzev asked me excitedly where I thought the Party and Government were and why they did not stop the panic. I told him that they were snapping at each other somewhere underneath the Kremlin. Was he too leaving, I asked him. He was so indignant that he almost knocked me down. Only traitors or half-traitors were saving their skins, he shouted; he was not one to run from the Germans. A small crowd had gathered round us; it was as if people were hungry for outspoken words. 'Don't harangue me,' I told him. 'These are the people who need telling what to do,' and I pointed at the group surrounding us. But he only stared at me with a vague, haunted look. His automatic loyalty had broken down, but it did not enter his mind to take any initiative. The driver had let the reins slip but the horse merely trod aimlessly in its old tracks.

Boris Borisovich was alone in his flat; his wife and daughter had gone to stay with relatives in the country. He showered questions on me. Where was Gardinashvili? I did not know. Belinsky?

In the militia. Captain Ivanov? He had been shot down. Major Serebrovsky? Killed in an air-raid. Colonel Kosmodemyansky? According to my information, Serov, one of the heads of the NKVD, had shot him with his own hand. General Groshchenko? Snug in Sverdlovsk. Colonel-Engineer Gantman? I was uncertain but feared that his disappearance portended great danger for us.

Some of our friends had failed to live up to our hopes; others, like Kosmodemyansky, had made heroic but untimely attempts to shake off the Stalin oligarchy.

When I arrived, Boris Borisovich had been busy ringing up people he knew in the hope of organising a stand. But the men he applied to were mostly high up in the hierarchy; their reactions were like those of Burtzhev. The more a system is centralised the better it works—so long as it works; but the moment the central control is weakened the key men under it cease to function at all. These people were like highly-trained dogs, let loose in a strange city without their masters. The top men, specialised in watching for the movement of the master's lips, were incapable of independent action. Organise resistance to the enemy? What a good idea! End the panic? What an excellent proposal! But... but how? There were no instructions from *above*.

I got up to go. 'You will be fighting as a partisan?' he asked me. 'Yes.' 'Just what will you do?' I said I could give no details. He nodded. 'I don't suppose they'll interfere with a disabled man like myself,' he said, 'so don't forget, if I can be of any use, call on me. I might help to finish off one of the German high-ups.'

By October 15th and 16th the panic had reached its height. During those two days a single regiment in the right place could have taken Moscow, not because the people did not want to resist, but because disorder had reached a state which only an imaginative writer could describe. There was complete anarchy. Looting was widespread. The normal food supplies had broken down and crowds smashed their way into the food stores and took what they wanted. The men in charge of the stores urged them on: 'It's not our job to keep things stored for the Nazis.'

Very quickly the material disintegration affected morals. Sex relations became free, even promiscuous. Young girls offered themselves to the admirers with whom normally they would only have strolled sentimentally in the parks or gone to the cinema. Others, on the contrary, rejected their suitors. They wanted to be able to face the Nazis uncommitted. I have no doubt concerning these facts, but I find it impossible to explain the motives. Men were shocked both by the girls' perverse decisions and by their

cynical frankness. It seemed that some ominous day of reckoning was at hand.

The most alarming results of the general collapse were those affecting the health system. Regular treatment at the hospitals of Moscow had broken down completely. Patients were neglected. Kitchens failed to function, nursing went to pieces. Clearly we had been living in a world of illusions. Much that we had taken for granted as the ordinary conduct of decent citizens proved to be an outward observance dictated by authority. Instincts bottled up in peace-time owing to lack of freedom were now finding an ugly release.

The nastiest symptom of all, however, was on the political side. Neither the panic among the élite nor the disorder among the masses ever showed any signs of provoking a widespread revolt against the régime which had made it all possible. I never heard of one single instance of a spontaneous anti-Stalinist mass demonstration, such as might have been expected in the Western world. All police control had disappeared but nowhere did one see a single anti-régime slogan chalked on a wall.

This was certainly not due to fear of the NKVD or NKGB¹ or even of the Army commissars. All that fry were keeping very, very quiet. Nor was it due to Party or Comsomol activity; for more than a month there had been no meetings of any kind. I frankly do not know how to explain it but I suspect that it was due to a combination of causes. There was what I have called the force of mental automatism. There was also genuine patriotism and genuine fear and hatred of the Nazis. But there was another and, I believe, exceedingly powerful factor: unreadiness for the removal of the centralised control of every thought and action. The effect was of a people who had not merely panicked but had ceased to have a mind at all and were incapable of engendering their own inward impulses to act.

In the closed city of the Kremlin the Politbureau sat in continuous session all day on October 15th. Stalin's lieutenant, Poskrobyshev, spent hour after hour at the telephone, getting information from every member of the Central Party Committee and from every Party Secretary as to what the mood of the people was and whether the masses were loyal to Stalin. Stalin was holding his hand till he had sufficient information.

Meanwhile a spirit of resistance to the enemy was growing. Shcherbakov, First Secretary of the Moscow Committee and a

¹ Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of State Security.—*Translator*.

Politbureau candidate, demanded an order that Moscow should be defended to the last man; if need be, other front lines should be stripped to keep Moscow free as a vital symbol of the U.S.S.R.

This view was opposed by Beria and Zhdanov, the one in favour of maintaining at all costs the defence of the Caucasus, the other of Leningrad. Without the Caucasus, Beria said, the U.S.S.R. would have to fight without petroleum and without sufficient grain. Without Leningrad, said Zhdanov, nothing could prevent a spear-thrust from Finland and the Baltic Provinces (i.e. the former Baltic States) through the north of the U.S.S.R. to the vital region of the Urals; besides, in Soviet eyes and in the eyes of other countries too, Leningrad was the real citadel of the Revolution; finally, with the loss of Leningrad 'Russia' (as Zhdanov put it) would lose that 'window on Europe' which Peter the Great had given it.

But the debate that day was not merely between those who were in favour of defending Moscow at all costs and those who thought that there were three strategic areas which it was vital to defend; it was also between those who wanted to continue the war and those who, led by Molotov, were half-way towards capitulation. Molotov actually suggested that Hitler should be approached through a neutral intermediary. But Mikoyan and Kalinin, supported by Beria and Shcherbakov, objected that this would lose us the alliance of Britain and America.

At last, at about four in the afternoon, Stalin spoke. Reports from the provinces were favourable. The masses had not rejected him. He felt free to act. His decision was: 'We shall defend Moscow with determination to the last drop of our blood.' Molotov immediately joined the Moscow leaders in acclaiming this decision. He was still the same Molotov who, in 1930, had declared that it was 'great good fortune to be able to work under Comrade Stalin's leadership'. When it came to action Beria organised resistance with great vigour, even though to the very last he contrived to thwart any attempt to lay open the Caucasus front.

Throughout the day the population had heard hourly announcements over the radio that in another hour an important statement would be made. At last they heard Shcherbakov, in a short and typically impassioned speech, tell them that the Government was taking decisive steps to restore order, that anyone caught looting or spreading panic would be summarily shot, and nobody could leave Moscow without special permission. This statement was repeated a number of times the following day. The moral balance had tipped the other way.

THE GHOSTS RETURN: GENERALS KUTUZOV, MUD AND FROST

ON OCTOBER 16th the Intelligence Service learned that the Germans were planning a large-scale parachute attack on our aircraft industry district of Moscow. A regiment of engineers and scientists was armed with automatic weapons taken from damaged aircraft and with the new weapons which came to be known in the West as 'Molotov cocktails': a brilliant improviser had found several cases of Narzan mineral water in the cellars of the infirmary and had filled them with inflammable spirit and fitted them with a firing device. Pavlenko and I who were on night-watch duty together could boast between us two different aircraft guns and a few dozen of these cocktails.

That night a tremendous attack did indeed develop, but the anti-aircraft fire which Moscow could now put up was formidable and only one aircraft got through, and that only to be shot down over our aerodrome. After a short silence we again heard aircraft overhead, and down came incendiaries, but without causing serious damage.

That same night I had an unexpected visit from an officer who brought me a proposal from a higher-ranking officer at a nearby aircraft factory. He spoke in the name of a group of airmen who had finally decided to take action against the Kremlin and who wanted me to join them and bring over to their side a number of pilots with fighter planes at their disposal. In view of our group's decision of July 5th and of my own later observations I could not accept, but I agreed to go and see this ringleader—let us call him simply 'the Officer'.

His arguments struck me as unrealistic; they were rather like those of a certain United States general who recently tried to convince the authorities that if only a company of Chiang Kai Shek's soldiers were landed on the Chinese mainland, the whole of China would rise against the Communists. How easy it is to build paper castles! Our conversation, which I noted immediately afterwards, ran something like this:

The Officer: 'The people now hate Stalin so much that they don't even mention him any longer. The time has come to act.'

Myself: 'What grounds have you for believing this? Merely their silence? In my opinion the great majority subconsciously connect the salvation of the country with Stalin. How, otherwise, do you explain the fact that nowhere—not even in your factory—is there any sign of criticism of his leadership or a single anti-Stalin slogan?'

The Officer: 'True, but the people may pass from silence to hostility.'

Myself: 'No revolutionary has the right to act on arbitrary suppositions. The facts are that the ordinary man is shaken by events, wants to save his country, is prepared to go even with Stalin and doesn't want to see him hampered. Besides, only yesterday the word was given to defend Moscow; the crowds would lynch anyone who attempted to create disorder.'

The Officer: 'All the same, I promise you the support of the people. All we need is to make a radio appeal.'

Myself: 'And from which radio station?'

The Officer: 'We shall capture the Comintern station.'

Myself: 'What with? Don't you know that it is under armed NKVD guard?'

The Officer: 'Of course I know. Find me ten fighter pilots and aircraft, get Gardinashvili to hold Beria's hands for a couple of days and I guarantee the rest.'

Myself: 'Beria has a whole company of personal guards who are not under Gardinashvili's orders at all. Besides, Beria isn't a thimble to be hidden for a couple of days. But let's suppose you do get hold of the Comintern broadcasting station, what about the Kremlin? And the Lubyanka? And the Central Executive Committee School (NKVD), the Red Army Staff G.H.Q., the Central Offices of the Supreme Command, the Central Post and Telegraph Office, the Army Supplies H.Q.?'

The Officer: 'There will be a mass uprising and the people will storm the Kremlin. We will kill Stalin and arrest his immediate entourage. Then we will offer the Germans an armistice.'

Myself: 'And what will our Allies say?'

The Officer: 'The interests of the U.S.S.R. come first . . .'

Myself: 'And why should Hitler accept an armistice and not take advantage of your adventure to seize Moscow?'

The Officer: 'If he doesn't agree, we will go on fighting with renewed energy and compel him to accept our terms.'

Myself: 'And where do you propose to find within a few days a

vast apparatus of government—where are your ministers, your commanders, your economists?’

The Officer: ‘We shall order everybody to stay temporarily at their posts, until the situation clears. . . .’

What a lovely present for Hitler that would have been!

Events seemed to move with horrible swiftness. Returning to my post, I found unhappy news waiting for me. My lifelong friend and comrade, whose identity (because of his links with others) I am still forced by discretion to conceal under the name ‘Belinsky’, was dead; he had been killed in an engagement with Nazi tanks. The death of one man may seem a trifling thing to record at such a moment, but there were too few of us; friendship apart, it was a terrible blow to learn that one of our best men had gone. I can only speak of him in general terms. He had a rich mind, a sterling character and tremendous energy. His approach was always positive and practical; yet at the same time he was a brilliant theoretician. He and I were the two leading authorities in the country on Morelli’s *Code de la Nature* which had been such a tremendous inspiration to the communist idea. It was not enough for him to criticise, he had to know the ultimate aim and the whole life history of a measure or a movement. This thoroughness told him that we could not just destroy Stalin’s régime, we had to understand it and repair it stage by stage.

We Revolutionary Democrats had achieved our own liberation from the chains of Marxism-Leninism and the elaboration of our theories had been largely Belinsky’s work. He had ceaselessly proclaimed the ideal of the universal brotherhood of men and of universal social justice. Though himself in no sense a believer he regarded Christianity as one of the great systems of universal human values.

He had been recruited into the militia while I was in Sverdlovsk. In the note he left for me he spoke about his pride at being able to take part in the battle for Moscow, for in it, he believed, the fate of mankind hung in the balance: ‘Defending Moscow,’ he wrote, ‘we are defending the whole of Europe against the rule of twentieth-century political banditry.’

‘Comrade, at last the sky will break
And a new day with leaping flames
On fallen stones of tyranny
In happiness will write our names.’

For days, these words of Pushkin’s haunted me and absorbed my thoughts. No loyalty, believed Belinsky, carries greater honour than

loyalty to a dead friend. He never crosses my thought without recalling that belief.

The following afternoon (October 17th) I was summoned by General Konovalets, commanding the local garrison.

'Well, how are things with your boys, Tokaev?' he asked.

'Just what do you mean by "my boys", Comrade General?'

'Don't be so damned cagey!' he cursed. 'Speak out like a human being.'

'You needn't bellow, Konovalets. All's quiet with us. No cowards and no panic. We shall stick to our positions to the last round.'

'To the last round! That's fine! And what will you do when you haven't got a last round? Don't expect me to supply you with ammunition because I haven't got any. What sort of scientists are you if you can't manage your own ammunition?'

'We're all right for ammunition for the present. When we run out we'll use home-made bottle grenades, and if there aren't any left we'll still have our cutlasses.'

'That's more like it. Do you know what Section 3 say, the dirty scoundrels? Traitors, whores they are . . . they want me to guarantee regular supplies of ammunition and food as well! The dirty swine! Where am I to find it? Go to Stalin? B—— hell, I know he hasn't got any.'

'Swearing won't help, Konovalets—our best weapon is a cool head.'

'The hell it is . . . You scientists are decent folk but you're too cold-blooded. All you see in a war is a kind of practical experiment. But now I'll tell you something that will make you curse your own grandmother . . . I believe you were once the head of the Aerodynamical Laboratory?'

'I was.'

'You made it, eh? Built it up? Loved it?'

'I did.'

'Well, now I'm going to order you to blow it up, destroy it, unlove it.'

'Are you mad?'

'And why shouldn't I be if all the others are off their rockers? Look, look at it for yourself and see if I'm spinning you a yarn.'

I read the orders he had received. What could they mean if not that Moscow was to be abandoned after all, or that the authorities did not believe that it could be defended successfully? I could see Konovalets's unwashed, unshaven features twitching like untidy scrub in a gusty wind. I handed the paper back to him. He flung it down and buried his face in his hands.

'Well?' he said at last.

'They are traitors, scoundrels.'

'What did I tell you? Whores . . . traitors . . . Well, those are the orders. Get ready. But don't spring it till I give the word. I won't do that till it's quite clear that Moscow is lost.'

I refused to obey. He shouted at me that he could have me shot for insubordination. I stepped forward, spread my arms wide and, with an oath, challenged him to shoot, there and then.

'To hell with you,' he said. 'As if I'd waste a bullet on you. But orders have to be obeyed.'

Again I refused. He insisted; the orders were Stalin's. I became formal, gave him his full title. He cursed me roundly:

'Talk to me as man to man.'

We went on shouting at each other. Two people were struggling in him, the officer, conditioned to obey orders, and the man who understood. At last he agreed to find someone else to do the job.

Actually the step was never taken. A few days later new sealed orders came for Pavlenko and myself: we were to organise immediate re-evacuation, taking with us the more valuable equipment.

Shcherbakov's announcement that Moscow was to be defended to the last had put heart into us. Now we felt that unless some new and unknown force came to our aid, Moscow was indeed a lost city.

Our task was not easy. There were vociferous objections when we passed on the orders. After all, had I not myself refused to obey Konovalets? Why should my colleagues take my instructions lying down? But if the job was to be done at all it had to be done quickly; we would not offer any assistance to Hitler. Stern measures were taken. Every hour counted. Major-Engineers, Colonel-Engineers, Captain-Engineers, Professors of all ranks, all were brought in to help load up. We were like a crowded port caught in a high wind. While Pavlenko looked after stores, I rallied squads and mounted anti-aircraft guns on ordinary platform wagons. Learned men were feverishly disconnecting, taking down, packing, loading. Through the hours of darkness we stumbled on with the desperate work, hating every bit of it, yet straining our throbbing muscles to complete it if only an hour ahead of what seemed humanly possible.

Amid all this turmoil, too, came personal requests. It may be remembered that Yuryevich was Deputy Head of the Air Force Cadres Administration, and one of the men who had helped to harry me only six months earlier, when I was demoted from being Head of the laboratory. Now he sought me out on the aerodrome, followed

me round till he could get me alone, and begged me—to find room for his daughters on our train. Was he sure, I asked him as calmly as I could, that a ‘candidate for espionage’ was a fit person to look after his daughters? He pleaded with me: this was no time to rake over the past, we had all been fools and we were now paying for it; what was to become of his daughters if the Germans came?

Of course I took his daughters along, thinking all the time of all the thousands of other daughters whose fathers were not big bosses. After all, he was a very important man and I hardly had a choice; but it did not make me love his kind more, or dream less of a world in which such discrimination would not be possible.

At last the preparations were completed. I went to the telephone and reported to the High Command. Pavlenko and I received formal ‘thanks in the name of the country’ for having done our task in record time. I climbed into the cab beside the engine driver. My second evacuation had begun.

If there was chaos in Moscow it was nothing to the condition of the suburban railway network. Train crept after train, nose to tail, more slowly than ox-wagons. As they moved they constantly added to their freight, for enterprising individuals broke on to the track and scrambled on board, dragging their baggage with them. There were no time-tables; it was a free-for-all.

What was our destination? Even that we did not know. Our orders showed only that we and our equipment were to be taken ‘outside Moscow’. New orders overtook us, relayed from train to train. The enemy was carrying out a vast pincer movement and the jaws were closing on us; there was not a moment to lose; no halt before Arzamas (250 miles, as the crow flies, east of Moscow).

But orders, even in a desperate hour of war and backed by the threat of a firing squad, were no remedy against blocked railway lines. I moved from the engine to the railway van, where Pavlenko was sleeping soundly, coiled up among the packing cases. After what we had gone through, the stillness in this piled-up confusion was paradise. Not even the nearby thunder of bombs and artillery could prevent the steady rumble of wheels from lulling us to sleep.

Some twelve hours later, I awoke in an astonishing silence. Out of silence came the sound of singing. It was Pavlenko, his legs dangling out of the open doors of the van. His hands lay peacefully on his knees and he stared out into space as he softly sang to himself a very old song, written by Lermontov to commemorate Napoleon’s vain seizure of Moscow in 1812.

'Uncle, tell me, it was not for nothing, was it,
That Moscow razed by fire
Was abandoned to the French?

'There had been terrible battles, hadn't there?
Aye, men say they were terrible.
It is not for nothing that Russia remembers
The battle of Borodino.'¹

For a century these words had been pregnant with meaning for Russians, but never before had I heard them from Pavlenko, an ebullient Cossack of Ukrainian origin, born in the North Caucasus.

I asked him where we were and why he had remembered this pre-revolutionary song. He did not know the answer to either question. This, surely, is the very nature of such traditional sentiments, they well up naturally in moments of life and death. Now that his very existence was at stake, the ordinary man had stopped thinking about Stalinism and socialism. Spontaneously, with all the irresponsibility of profound natural forces, the past had linked up with the present and was driving us forward. The threat to Moscow had deepened the feeling of basic *Russian* patriotism which had been awakened in the first days of the war. This was noticeable everywhere. For the moment, the U.S.S.R. as a conception had ceased to exist and in its place was that which, theoretically, the U.S.S.R. had ended for ever—'Rossiya', the Russian Europe.

Day waned and night descended on our line of wagons becalmed somewhere in the Russian plains. From time to time a train of wounded ground past us. The officer in charge of the junction told me that we should have to wait until new orders came from Moscow as to our further destination. My human freight was still sleeping, some under the tarpaulins covering the loaded platforms, others in the now chill open air. The driver too was asleep. There was certainly no point in waking them. With consciousness, as we both knew only too well, would come hunger, and we had no food. Suddenly, in the still hours of the night, from a train drawn up nearby, came the heart-rending strains of one of those endless refrain songs which Russian foot soldiers had sung as far back as Peter the Great.

'Soldier lads, bravo my boys,
Tell me where your grand-dads be,'

¹ A verse from one of Lermontov's poems entitled *Borodino*.

came the voices of the cantors, and then in a great wave the bass boom of the answering choir:

‘Our grand-dads are our glorious victories,
That’s who our grand-dads be!’

We crept nearer and listened.

‘Soldier lads, bravo my boys,
Tell me where your good wives be.’
‘Our good wives are our loaded muskets
That’s who our good wives be.’

‘Soldier lads, bravo my boys,
Tell me where your sisters be.’
‘Our sisters are our bayonets,
Our bayonets and our sharp swords.’

I could hardly believe my own ears, it was so unthinkable that these were Soviet soldiers, in the Soviet age, in a Soviet train, and not even men from the ranks but Red Army officers, members and candidates for membership of the Soviet Communist Party. It was not as if there were not a big repertory of genuine Soviet songs. Not only had the propagandists made sure over the years that there were hundreds of them, but there were good songs, born out of the Civil War, sprung from its desperate battles with the Whites and its glorious victories; some of them were fine songs by any standards. Yet these were not the songs which our men were singing now, but those refrains which, before the war, anyone would have laughingly said had been long forgotten. Pavlenko turned to me with a strange expression on his face: ‘We are living through the re-birth of old Russia,’ he said softly.

A people so meanly let down by its leaders and now so savagely attacked by the Nazi hordes, like an old tree stump in which there was still life, had suddenly burst forth with new shoots which were exactly like those it had borne under the Tsars. Later I learned that the same thing was observed not only in Russia proper, but also in the Ukraine and the Caucasus. It made us both very thoughtful to realise to what an extent the people had now taken their fate into their own hands. Like it or not, Russian nationalist pride had now become the vital source of hope for the country. It was both heartening and alarming; heartening because it undoubtedly carried the will to victory, yet alarming as a portent of the future.

For would not this pride, after victory (and victory we certainly desired) turn to chauvinism and even into messianic folly? The U.S.S.R. was essentially a multi-national state in which the true Russians (excluding the Cossacks) were in the minority, yet were numerically superior to any one of the non-Russian peoples taken by itself, and, for historical reasons, Russian was the all-state language. With these advantages which the Russians held over the others, a healthy enlightened community was possible only if Russian nationalist tendencies were kept strictly under control. But how great would be the danger, after victory, of these very tendencies controlling state policy! If this happened there would be no chance at all for that real friendship and equality on which alone we could build our happy co-existence.

Pavlenko took it all more calmly than I did. He was sure that the U.S.S.R. as we had known it would break up into several national states. He even believed that Russia proper would, through this natural fragmentation, be reduced to the ancient limits of Muscovy. He assumed that a similar national revival to that of the Russians would take place among the non-Russian peoples, but he overlooked much, including the Russians' relative numbers and strength.

However this might be, Hitler had undoubtedly made a colossal mistake; he had aroused more than he had bargained for; he had awakened the spirit which explained Russia's past, the great historical victories. This Stalin and his men understood perfectly, and in an astonishingly short time they reversed their propaganda policies to suit the circumstances. By October 20th the voice of the totalitarian Soviet propaganda machine had turned into the voice of the past.

It is easy to be wise after any event. To have been wise so swiftly and so thoroughly was a stroke of genius. Incidentally it proved how well the Kremlin's machinery for sounding public opinion continued to work.

On November 7th Stalin addressed the Army and the people in the following terms:

'In this war, may the heroic figures of our great ancestors, Alexander Nevsky, Dmitry Donskoy, Kuma Minin, Alexander Suvorov and Michail Kutuzov be our inspiration!'

The man who gave this watchword had, officially, throughout his life, fought Tsarism as the 'watch-dog of European and Asiatic reaction'. Yet it was not on Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, Kautsky, Bakunin or Lenin that he called now but on the ghosts of the great Tsarist generals. Whatever else it was, this surely amounted

to a confession of bankruptcy of the 'all-conquering' Marxist-Leninist idea; it also implied a lack of confidence in the non-Russian peoples of the Union since no mention was made of *their* historical leaders. Finally it meant an admitted belief that the re-awakened Russian national spirit was the last and only hope of salvation for the country—and the Politbureau.

Perhaps it is worth pausing for a moment to remind ourselves who these great 'new leaders' were. Prince Alexander of Novgorod broke the invading Swedish army on the Neva in 1240, and was therefore surnamed Alexander Nevsky. Dmitry Donskoy lived in 1359–89 and was Prince of Moscow; he expanded its territory and ruled with an iron hand over the tributary principalities of Tver, Ryazan and Nizhegorod. It was he who began the extension of Moscow's controls over the non-Russian peoples between Russia and the Urals, and imposed the Orthodox faith on them. Kuzma Minin was the local ruler of Nizhny-Novgorod. Calling on 'all the Russians', he succeeded in arousing an all-national movement to resist the Polish invaders in 1611 and 1612. The armies he raised were led by Dmitry Pozharsky and there is a monument to both these men in Moscow.

Alexander Suvorov is notorious for his many successful expeditions against non-Russian peoples. He was a brilliant soldier whose gifts were used for unworthy ends. Under him the Russian troops penetrated into Northern Italy and Switzerland and eventually, in 1799, defeated the French. Another of his 'great deeds', which is no longer mentioned by official Soviet historians, was his savage annihilation of the Nogai people in the Northern Caucasus.

Finally, Field-Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov, Suvorov's pupil, for his age a man of broad culture, led the Russian armies throughout the Napoleonic wars; they were under his command at Borodino, in the earlier great defence of Moscow, and in harrying the French as they withdrew from Russia.

Such were the men on whom Stalin called, some of them defenders of the Russian soil, others leaders of invading armies, but all until now labelled 'invaders, oppressors, bloodthirsty conquerors'.

But if, in the official versions of the battle of Moscow, the whole credit for its successful issue is given to Stalin, much of it should in reality be ascribed to certain natural forces released—albeit unintentionally—by Hitler.

The Germans had launched their attack on the U.S.S.R. on June 21st. They had probably intended to begin a little earlier, but their

plans had been thrown out by the unexpected resistance in Yugoslavia at the end of March. Nevertheless, they did start reasonably early in the year, when the beaten-earth cross-country roads could be trusted to be dry, or at least free from crippling mud, for a considerable time. But as we have seen, when they were almost at the gates of Moscow, the Nazis unexpectedly and most foolishly halted. Not only did they halt—they halted for an idiotically long time. Even if the mechanised forces had outdistanced the supplies in the initial advance, it could not have taken so much time to catch them up. Yet it was not until October that the supreme psychopath of Germany decided to go on. He had indeed got everything in position for the final knock-out when the first of our ancient allies, one upon whom neither Hitler nor Stalin could have counted so early, showed that he could come ahead of time. This was another great traditional soldier of the great plains, General Mud.

In the first week of October it began to rain and snow. Soon the weather conditions were unbearable. Aircraft were bogged down. Tanks slithered and dug themselves to a standstill. Nothing on wheels could move unless it was drawn by horses. The Nazi armies, trained on fine motoring roads, had seen nothing like it. It is now fashionable to say that the worst enemy of mechanised armies is extreme cold, but that is not really true of such a country as Russia proper. There is no more frightful enemy of a mechanised army in movement than mud. Not to speak of true swamps, dirt roads too get covered deeper and deeper with a universal sticky layer of lubricant. Add to this dense mists and persistent rain and sleet, and the effect on men and machinery spells defeat. The soldier loses his vitality, his gumption, his drive; he feels lost. Engines overheat or become choked with mud; oil and fuel are exhausted as they slither foot by foot through quagmires; supplies fail to come up on time. To re-form troops to meet counter-attack becomes virtually impossible. Discipline breaks down because the High Command is forced to insist on the fulfilment of unfulfillable orders. In desperation it then replaces competent men with others who turn out to be less competent. Confidence breaks down. Tanks are no longer movable. The infantry gradually turns into a mud-steeped, apathetic mass, no good for battle. The motionless units become easy targets, first for enemy reconnaissance, then for enemy artillery and partisan raids. For the invader mere existence becomes hell.

All this was now the fate of Hitler's armies at the approaches to Moscow. Apart from the hastily recruited militiamen, there were hardly any soldiers in the field against them. In Moscow itself,

as I have shown, the panic and chaos were indescribable. Any day the Kremlin expected the Germans to march in. Even it had forgotten its eternal ally, mud. The Germans could not march. They did move forward, but so slowly that it did not count. In 1945 I was told by a captured Wehrmacht Colonel that this belated advance on Moscow cost approximately as much petrol as the whole operation from the Vistula to Smolensk.

In these conditions, only a strategic ass could continue to insist on advance. Hitler was such an ass. The German Command were apparently unable to grasp—or unwilling to admit—that it was impossible for them to finish the war before the onset of winter. The extraordinary thing was that they had apparently made no provision whatever against such a setback. Even while the weather was still warm, we had been puzzled that there seemed to be no preparations for getting the German forces into winter kit. This was one of the subjects on which prisoners were questioned closely. Some said that they were sure of being in Moscow by November 7th, that is to say, before the anniversary of the October Revolution. Others were not even aware of the need to know the answer. Though how they expected to keep warm, even in Moscow, remains a mystery.

Usually it takes several weeks for General Mud to hand over the command to General Frost, but in 1941 *this took only two days*. The frosts were suddenly terrible. The change coincided with the last 'final attack', which was timed for December 4th. That day I returned by air to Moscow. Enemy tanks had by then ploughed their infinitely slow way through mud to a line joining Dmitrov-Zvenigorod-Narvovominsk and Serpukhov; now they were suddenly cemented in. The Fates were on our side. We witnessed the first decisive military show-down between totally mechanised forces and totally impassive General Frost.

It was an unhopd-for miracle. We had not even expected the frost, and when it came we did not imagine that German synthetic petrol or carburettor design were not proof against it. But they were not. Their petrol froze. And down the mercury crept—ten, twenty, thirty, forty degrees of frost. If a soldier cleared his throat and spat, a small blob of ice tinkled on the ground at his feet. The Germans did not even have anti-freeze mixture in their radiators. They had provided their machine tools with hydraulic and other automatic devices—the devices were no longer automatic. Aircraft could not touch-down without danger: their shock absorbers were solid. The army was not only cold but thirsty; all rivers were frozen, water was hidden beneath inches-thick armour, and he

who has not cut a hole in such ice at such a temperature and tried to draw water has no conception of what this means. Metal burned the naked flesh. Above all the Germans were cold, bitterly cold. They ceased to laugh at our men's clumsy, heavy, wadded and quilted kit, our deer-stalker caps. On their heads they had only caps of imitation woollen cloth. They might as well have gone to war in paper caps out of Christmas crackers. So the proud Wehrmacht, on the eve of triumph, itself became a horde—a horde searching for liquor and warm clothing to pillage; their appearance became fantastic. But still they were cold.

We were cold too, but only a little colder than usual. We were at home—and our hearts were warm. Our hearts were aglow because a great myth had suddenly vanished and become as nothing: the myth of German engineering and technological perfection. Had we not seen the immobility of all those lovely machines, we should never have believed it. For we had always made plans for keeping machines working in conditions of cold, and we would never have believed that the Germans had not.

Another belief too was destroyed—that the Nazis were, after all, civilised men, who would behave in a civilised way. We could no longer think that of a horde of marauders who went about wrapped in every conceivable kind of garment, even bedclothes and women's underclothes. What a feast it was for the Soviet propaganda units! They vied with one another in getting photographs and above all film shots of the *Herrenrasse* when out visiting. It was now that two leading authors, Ilya Ehrenburg and Alexey Tolstoy, launched the watchword: 'Comrade, kill your German!' It was a cruel watchword. But had the Germans not deserved it?

In the meantime the despised Soviet railways were rushing train after train west from the Soviet Far East. Well before the war the Soviet Army Command had been divided into two autonomous parts—an eastern army based on Vladivostok and Khabarovsk had been set apart against a possible invasion from Japan. Now the risk was being taken of thinning the eastern defences in order to save Moscow. And Moscow itself had woken up. There was hardly a museum piece—firing or cold steel—which was not brought out and used. Old railway tracks were twisted into anti-tank traps. Many houses were turned into machine-gun nests. On December 6th completely fresh Red Army units, reinforced by enthusiastic units of the new militia, began a counter-attack, under the command of General Frost.

On November 16th the Nazis had thrown in 51 divisions against Moscow, among these 14 tank divisions and five motorised. Two

divisions struck through Klin, Solnechnogorsk, Rogachovo, Yahroma, Dmitrov, while General Guderman's tank army advanced through Tula and Kashira, proposing to come out on the Riazan-Kolomna-Orexhovo-Zuyevo line, to get at us from the rear. In the centre of the front the enemy had broken in through Istra and Zvenigorod and Narofominsk,

Now we struck back. Suddenly the frozen-in Germans saw before them a tidal wave of humanity. In the first five days they lost more than 5,000 dead and masses of equipment, and when our advance died down, forty days later, they were 300,000 men and officers worse off and the field of battle was everywhere thickly littered with broken-up and frozen-in machinery of war. How enthusiastically the local populace of the liberated zone met us I need not describe. The reception they provided everywhere was yet further proof that he who would conquer Russia or the U.S.S.R. needs to establish friendship with three factors difficult to woo—General Mud, General Frost—and the common people of the land.

THE COMMISSARS RETURN

MOSCOW WAS safe and we settled down to the ordinary drudgery of a war-time winter. I went back to Sverdlovsk. On February 23rd, when the Red Army celebrates its anniversary, I addressed a workers' meeting to 'report' on the defence of Moscow. The official directives were like an echo of the days of peace: the whole credit for Moscow's safety was to go to Stalin's brilliance and to the Communist Party. I attempted nevertheless an objective analysis. After praising the heroism of the people and the Army I referred to General Mud and General Frost as well as to Hitler's stupidities of last summer; I warned my listeners against premature optimism: the enemy would attack again as soon as the weather made it possible and we could not count on their repeating their mistakes.

I gave away no secrets, I told no lies, I urged my audience to increase their war effort; nevertheless the local Party boss, Grebenshchikov, who had never been near the firing line, reported me to our Political Department for disparaging the Army leadership and exaggerating the fighting qualities of the enemy. A few days later I was summoned by Commissar-Colonel Danilov to answer for my errors.

I was in exceedingly low spirits. In pre-war days I had argued on similar occasions because of an unquenchable optimism which always seemed to bubble up in me, but now its very source was dried up. In the past months I had been appalled by our leaders' incompetence, while the heroism of the masses had been a revelation to me. More acutely than ever I felt how artificial was the system of which the Danilovs, the Babkins, the Illarionovs, and the Grebenshchikovs, were part. I would gladly have died, so greatly did I long for respite from it. I had done my duty to my country honourably and conscientiously; I wanted no reward or thanks, but it was unutterably depressing to be back under this scrutiny. It seemed to me that once the Nazis were beaten I would no longer be able to go on living amidst all this dead wood.

I do not think that I have ever, before or since, acted with so little regard for principle. I capitulated completely. I assured the Colonel Commissar that I would remedy my mistakes. After all

I was only one individual and I had the same weaknesses, I suppose, as any other of the two hundred million Soviet citizens. How easy it was for once to tread the smooth track of mental automatism!

I have often thought about it since and wondered what caused me to behave in a manner so foreign to my nature. The reason is not hard to find. For seven months the commissars had left us strictly alone, they had kept out of our lives. And though nobody had given us explicit grounds for hope, and the first military setbacks had lowered our spirits, we had nevertheless begun unconsciously to hope for a better future. It seemed that by shedding its blood the people would gain for itself a measure of freedom; this illusion had added to our strength in the days of the battle for Moscow.

But in 1942 the old clouds gathered again. The first sign of it that I saw—and never shall I forget it—was the case of Major Kolesnikov and his wife, Zarkina, an Air Force Captain-Engineer on the technical side. (She had used her right under Soviet law to keep her maiden name.) It was at the end of January '42 that Kolesnikov, freshly back from the battle of Moscow, described to a close circle of his friends something of the disorder in the capital, the officials' loss of authority and the reasons for the weakness of our forces. He said nothing that was not being openly talked about in Moscow, but here, in Sverdlovsk, the ruling commissars labelled him a 'pro-Nazi defeatist'. Kolesnikov disappeared. He was arrested and we never saw or heard of him again. His wife was charged before a Party Court with being 'in contact with her husband'! I was one of those on duty at the Party Bureau sitting when her case was heard. The chairman, Makhov, was a drone of a demagogue.

'How could you be accessory to the anti-Soviet views of your former husband, Comrade Zarkina?'

'I never heard him say a word against the Soviet régime.'

'What on earth do you mean? Why did you not hear his talk? Where was your revolutionary vigilance? Or are you deliberately trying to defend an enemy of the people?'

'No, no, Comrade Makhov, I would never defend enemy-of-the-people Kolesnikov . . . I admit my error . . .'

'It is a good thing you do admit your error, but the Party requires a plain answer to the question why you did not expose your husband in good time? Where was your revolutionary vigilance?'

Zarkina babbled senselessly in the manner which was required of her and the court passed a decision to 'recommend' her immediate divorce from her husband, a man whose guilt had been in no

way proved and whose fate nobody knew. I can, to this day, hear her saying: 'Since the organs of State Security have arrested him he must be an enemy of the people, a traitor, a spy and a defeatist.'

Was it for this that we had been ready to die at Moscow? Here was sufficient cause for my depression.

But there were other causes as well. I was badly overworked, my living conditions were abominable and I was worried about my family.

At that time I was a Major-Engineer and a senior lecturer in aerodynamics and aircraft design. My duties also included teaching at the Faculty of Special Aircraft Equipment and at the Faculty of Engineering. I was lecturing on the theory of automatic pilot systems and I had started a new course on the dynamic stability of highspeed aircraft. My class consisted of 150 men, some of them senior engineers and all of them at least university graduates.

This surely was a full-time job, but in addition, as 'war work', I had to give instruction in the latest Soviet fighter techniques, and, while I was in Moscow, I was appointed without my knowledge to be one of a group of scientists studying British and American techniques, to cope with craft already coming over under Lend-Lease. And all the time there was a constant sniping of enquiries about my progress with my 'flying bomb', a rocket I was supposed to be designing.

In short, I had plenty to do though who indeed would complain of this in the middle of the life and death struggle of his country? But I had not the hundredth part of the conditions which I needed for my work. I was in Moscow while the commissars and other drones were fixing up their living quarters in Sverdlovsk, and now I could not find a single room to myself.

Then there were family worries; my wife and daughter had left Moscow for the Caucasus in July, 1941, and I was without news of them or of my mother who was now advanced in years. In January I had asked permission to fetch them, but though transport was available for the families of the commissars I could not even take advantage of a service flight. It was not till many months later that they joined me—and until they arrived I had hardly any notion of their whereabouts. They had travelled back to Moscow and from there through Rostov, Krasnovodsk, Alma Ata and Novosibirsk to Sverdlovsk. My wife was exhausted by the journey and my daughter seriously ill. Yet still I could find no room for them; the commissars merely told me that I would manage 'somehow'. Even food was a problem. They had come without official invitation and therefore had no valid ration cards; these cards could not

simply be transferred from one place to another and it took me a long time to secure them even meagre rations.

Finally my colleagues of the Urals Industrial Institute helped me to get quarters in a four-room apartment in the hostel of the Institute. The two largest of the rooms were occupied by two middle-aged women who were relatives of the Deputy Head of the Coal Ministry, the third housed the family of a Moscow accountant, and in the fourth lived two lecturers, Beriozkin and Sokolov, and now also my wife, my daughter and myself. The room measured about twelve by ten feet. There was, of course, no bathroom, and there was only one convenience: its condition can be imagined since there was no drainage system. The Minister's relatives had electric light—ours had been cut off because of shortage of power. They got regular and ample supplies of food, fuel and cigarettes; my own ration of bread, about twenty ounces, had to feed the three of us.

Those were terrible days. It was hard for me to answer the questions which my little daughter asked of me. How could one continue to believe that there was fairness or humanity anywhere in the world? I envied those who had never seen or heard of such debasement as we suffered. *Oh life! Thou art a galling load!*¹

But I have run ahead of my story. That summer of 1942. Will Soviet people ever forget it? The enemy concentrated some 240 divisions against us, satellite as well as German. There began a gigantic advance along the whole of our drawn-out front. Sevastopol fell, Rostov-on-Don, Krasnodar, the whole of the Ukraine, Voronezh, Kerch, Novorossisk. The verb 'to fall' was conjugated several times a day. As autumn drew near, almost the whole Northern Caucasus was under the Nazi jackboot. The front followed the line of the River Terek and the Caucasus mountains. There were enemy divisions facing Dzauzhikau.² The enemy began to use the petroleum of Malgobek and Tuapse.

It was on about August 20th, 1942, that an extraordinary conference was called and special orders from Stalin were read out. They amounted to a declaration that further withdrawal was impossible, that commanding officers who were unable to prevent it would face the death penalty and NKVD punitive squads following our forces would shoot anyone who attempted to retreat.

These were shocking orders. The men knew quite as well as Stalin that they must fight. They were hampered by muddles in

¹ In English in the original.—*Translator.*

² Dzauzhikau, formerly Ordzhonikidze, formerly Vladikavkaz, after Beria's execution, once more Ordzhonikidze.

organisation and by renewed interference from Party demagogues. Now they were caught between two fires—Nazi barbarism and Stalinist barbarism. No healthy régime need resort to such measures.

(I have never been able to verify it, but there were rumours passed on by reliable people that Beria had opposed the orders and had even threatened to resign. He did not in fact direct the punitive squads; these were directed by Serov, now head of State Security, and Kruglov, then Beria's deputy. So persistent were the rumours of Beria's disagreement with Stalin that when, after the fall of Rostov, he transferred his headquarters to Dzauzhikau, we daily expected him to raise the banner of revolt in a last attempt to protect his Transcaucasus.)

Of no less interest were the events in which L. S. Mehlis, officer commanding the Central Political Administration of the Red Army, was involved. This man was immediately responsible for the collapse of the Crimean front. He was at that time also Deputy People's Commissar of Defence and represented the Supreme Command in the Crimea; he was one of Stalin's principal mouth-pieces, and it was with grim irony that we had watched him mis-manage the campaign. The Crimea is of the highest strategic importance to the U.S.S.R.; at the cost of mounting casualties Mehlis had laid it open to the enemy; then, although he lacked the necessary shipping and air-cover for the operation, he ordered a withdrawal across the Gulf of Kerch, losing in the course of it almost all his equipment and tens of thousands of men, drowned under enemy fire. After that Stalin's pet was reduced to the rank of Colonel and sent to a harmless distance from the fighting.

Kaganovich was a man of different calibre. A Party member since before the Revolution, he was Secretary of the Ukraine Central Party Committee in 1926-8; then he rose quickly to membership of the Central Committee, the Politbureau and the Orgbureau, to First Secretaryship of the Moscow Province and Town Party Committee and to the post of Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. A brilliant orator, a man of intense clarity of mind and of Caesarian will, he had organised and carried through two earlier measures of mass compulsion—collectivisation and the Party purges. I can only marvel at his restraint in allowing Malenkov to become Head of the Government after Stalin's death. I had taken a special interest in his career since the early thirties when he was sent by Stalin to deal personally with the artificial famine and the armed uprisings caused by the collectivisation in the North Caucasus. Accompanied by NKVD forces with

special powers, he ruthlessly forced the peasants to give up their grain, shooting those who hesitated and removing obstinate villagers wholesale to concentration camps. With complete disregard for human values he compelled the peasants to accept their new position as workers in state-administered *kolkhozes*.¹

My other reason for being interested in Kaganovich in those days was his part in destroying the Right-wing deviation; not that I belonged to it myself, but it had seemed a possible first step towards a system based on human values. After the fall of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy and the removal of Uglanov from First-Secretaryship of the Moscow Committee, it was Kaganovich who took over this key post and 'tidied up' in Moscow as Zhdanov did in Leningrad.

Perhaps the only good object to which he applied his genius for organisation was the transformation of Moscow's food supplies and public services into a system adequate to the needs of an integrated modern city. This achievement, which included the construction of the world-famous Moscow Underground Railway, was truly remarkable.

Now, in the throes of the Fatherland War (as it is called in the U.S.S.R.) when the Caucasus seemed about to be lost for ever, Kaganovich was called in again. The story told in top-level circles was that he flew out to the Kuban Region, drove his powerful fist into Mehlis's fattening face, had a number of *Nachalniks* shot, and ordered special squads armed with mortars and machine guns to open fire in the rear of any division which attempted to retreat.

These savageries, however, were powerless to throw back the enemy. What did stop the Nazis in the end was a combination of the same forces that saved us in the defence of Moscow: natural obstacles—this time the Caucasian mountains where the roads are few and difficult, the incompetence of the German High Command, who seemed unable ever to concentrate on a small enough front, and finally the spirit of the people in arms. This last factor, perhaps the most important of all, found its highest expression in the key battle of Stalingrad.

By the autumn of 1942 the Axis forces had reached those districts of the Northern Caucasus which were least loyal of all to Stalin—Checheno-Ingushetia, Dagestan, Dzaudzhikau and Grozny. As may well be imagined, I was following the situation closely, and I got from a reliable source an account of the following conversation by telephone between Stalin and Kubadi Kulov, First

¹ *Kolkhozes*: collective farms.—Translator.

Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee of North Ossetia (my own homeland).

'How do you do, Comrade Kulov. You are, I suppose, aware that the enemy is approaching glorious North Ossetia?'

'I am aware of it, Comrade Stalin. Indeed, we are already engaged with the enemy on North Ossetian soil.'

'How are the people of Ossetia conducting themselves?'

'Heroically, worthily, I have nothing bad to report except that we are short of arms and munitions.'

'Bravo, heroic Ossetia! Eternal memory to those who have given their lives for the independence of the North Ossetian Republic!'

'Glory to heroic Ossetia, Comrade Stalin!'

'But what of the bourgeois-nationalist extremists?'

'The people are defending their native land against the external enemy. I have simply not had time to look into the position of the bourgeois nationalists. Indirect information does suggest that certain partisan gangs in the forests and the mountains are fighting both the Nazis and the Soviet régime.'

'Are they? And what are their slogans, I wonder?'

'According to my information the slogan is *Down with Hitler, down with Stalin!*'

'Such traitors must be exterminated. We have two enemies now, but first we must deal with the external enemy, then with the internal . . .'

'Of course, later, we must deal with the internal enemy . . . I mean, of course, with the bourgeois nationalists.'

(After a brief but noticeable pause): 'Correct, Comrade Kulov . . . The Nazis must be halted, whatever the cost. The heroic people of Ossetia must cover themselves with glory, they must mobilise their grand traditions, anything but let the enemy make sport of them. Tell the public that the Party and the Government are following their deeds with the greatest attention and delight. Say that the whole Soviet *nation* (sic) sees them as the glory-crowned defenders of the Caucasus . . . If the enemy is held back, we shall issue special medals and decorations, we shall raise a monument to the national heroism in the capital of the Republic, the Ossetian people will get their deserts. Nor shall we forget your personal merit . . . We must take a number of measures as incentives. After victory, we shall see if we can review the land question. We will cancel peasant debts. We shall send the Republic all the farm implements it needs, we shall liberalise the national cultural policy.'

'Comrade Stalin, in this dire moment it would not be bad to return to the town of Ordzhonikidze its national name, Dzauzhikau.'

I have already discussed this with Comrade Beria and he is in complete agreement.'

'Comrade Beria has mentioned it to me. I promise I will pass a law to change the name of Ordzhonikidze to Dzauzhikau. You may tell the public that. The Russian nation was inspired by the names of Dmitri Donskoy and Alexander Nevsky; let us inspire the Ossetian people by changing the name of their capital city.'

When, in that autumn of 1942, I heard of places being captured so close to my home as Nalchik, I could bear it no longer; I applied to be transferred to no matter what post on the Caucasus front. One of the reasons I gave was admittedly naïve, though surely only a monster could fail to appreciate it: I said that I could not tolerate the thought of my mother, ageing and dependent on me, being in enemy-occupied territory while I was snug in the rear. But my other reason was more practical: I urged that, in the Caucasus, officers, to be effective, must be men who knew the local conditions, ways of life and languages. Yet it was exactly this practical reason which served me most ill. I ought to have foreseen it: the Political Department bristled with suspicions at once. When I talked it over with Danilov and Babkin, Danilov said, as though jokingly: 'We don't see it as being in our interests to supply the Caucasian nationalists—in your person—with a scientist and an officer of rank.' In the eyes of these commissars I was doubtless a secret 'bourgeois nationalist' trying to join my comrades. They considered me a Caucasian separatist. Yet there had been nothing in my conduct so far to give them the least reason to suspect me of this. Look at the voluntary part I had played in the defence of Moscow; Moscow was not the Caucasus, nor did its defence necessarily further Caucasian separatism. It was as fantastic to suspect me as if I had suspected the Russians of meaning to buy off the Nazis by giving them the Caucasus. Nothing was further from my mind than such idiocy.

But what really made me lose my temper was another remark made in that same conversation either by Danilov or by Babkin (I forget which of them it was): 'If we did decide to send you to the front, Comrade Tokaev, it would certainly not be to the Caucasus or to the Ukraine, but either to the north or to the west.'

I knew already that the general practice was for soldiers to be sent to fronts distant from their native land, but this did not remove my sense of bitter outrage, my feeling that I was belittled, scorned, because of my origin. Even had I still believed the daily trumpeted verbiage about the equality and fraternity of the peoples of

the U.S.S.R., could my faith possibly have withstood this bitter insult?

This revelation of my real position had, however, one result: it stirred me from the moral apathy into which I had sunk. I at once protested, and as sharply as I could.

From: Military Engineer of the Second Rank G. A. Tokaev, Lecturer of the Zhukovsky Air Force Academy, Party Card No. 1945892.

To: The Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks) Comrade Georgi Maximilianovich Malenkov.

DECLARATION AND COMPLAINT

In this time, which is so hard for our country, I consider it necessary to call the attention of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks) to a matter in which an incompetent approach is likely to have harmful consequences and to be advantageous only to our enemies.

To my application to be allowed to proceed to the Caucasian front, there to make use of my knowledge of the local traditions, customs and language in order to intensify the spirit of resistance, the Political Department of the Zhukovsky Academy has responded in a spirit of counter-revolutionary racial discrimination, contrary to the nationalities policy of the Party. I have been informed that if I were to be sent to any front at all it would be to the northern or the western front, but in no case either to the Caucasus or the Ukraine, the only reason for this being that I am a Caucasian.

As a member of the Party and as a citizen of the U.S.S.R., I register my vigorous protest against this discrimination. I am convinced that, in our present critical conditions, such irregular acts border on crime, for the motherland requires unity in face of the enemy, and not the dissemination of the seeds of disintegration. In accordance with my statutory rights as a Party member, and with the relevant clauses of the Constitution of the U.S.S.R., I request you to call the officers of the Political Department of the Zhukovsky Academy to book before the Party for allowing crass and dangerous distortions in the sphere of the nationalities policy of the Party.

(signed) G. A. Tokaev.

A copy of this document was sent to Air Colonel-General Shimanov, Deputy C.O. of the Air Force, Political Affairs. A little later, Gardinashvili brought it to the notice of Beria. But there

was no answer. I learned that all who saw my letter agreed that the political hooligans ought to be checked, but no doubt each of the big men was busy. (Malenkov, for one, had been appointed Stalingrad representative of the Supreme Command.) In any case I was not so arrogant as to press the matter further. But I drew my own conclusions. In my diary I noted: 'They are driving a non-nationalist into becoming a nationalist.' Six years later, in 1948, it occurred to me how aptly this applied to Tito.

Another of my personal experiences in that autumn of 1942 showed me that the rule of the commissars had returned in all its inhuman stupidity.

One day, after a lecture in the huge auditorium of the Urals Industrial Institute, I collapsed. I was not ill, I merely fainted from fatigue and malnutrition. Some of my students carried me to my wretched stable, and in the afternoon there they were again: they had put aside and brought me portions of their own miserable meal (this happened before my wife had joined me). Unfortunately this moved me so much that I quite forgot to go to another lecture. This had never yet happened to me. There was a knock at the door: 'Comrade Military Engineer,' said an orderly officer softly, as if afraid lest hostile ears should hear him, 'may I remind you that your students have been waiting for you more than an hour already. Have you forgotten you have a lecture?'

I had indeed forgotten everything. I had been in the grip of utter defeat of the will. I had had enough. But I pulled myself together and went to the lecture hall. I apologised, and there were answering murmurs of sympathy. My students understood—but not the fanatics to whom somebody had already reported me.

Another Party 'case' had flared up, and yet another Party trial. I should add that at that time there were many cases of lateness and many Party trials. Comrade Stalin's orders of August 20th called for the utmost effort from everyone. Therefore, said the prosecutors, not the slightest slackening of discipline could be allowed. The Party Bureau sat. Speeches, speeches, speeches. Demagogy, waffle, hours squandered in utter frivolity. I made no attempt to defend myself. There was nothing to defend. All I felt was sheer wonder that these men who knew my state of extreme fatigue, my time-table and the bestial conditions of my life could sit there and never say one word about the cause of my lateness. Could not one of them in decency observe that an hour or two earlier I had lectured till I fainted?

I was of course reprimanded. I was indifferent to it all. The sanction was sent for confirmation to the Party Commission of the

Urals Military Circuit. This court cancelled it, merely giving me an oral warning 'to pull myself together'. I was a little surprised that not a word was said about bourgeois nationalism. I was only told: 'At the present juncture our motherland needs you, Comrade Tokaev, as a scientist. The Party and the Government consider that you can greatly contribute to the strength of the Red Army by your knowledge of new forms of military engineering. Therefore, we find it possible to refrain from imposing on you a Party sanction . . .'

Touching, indeed almost kindly—were it not for what the decision implied. I had fought, would fight, was giving my best as a human being, as a citizen of my native land, but the bosses considered me only in terms of their state utilitarianism. I was, in short, not Tokaev, I was merely 'a certain scientist'. Certain functions of Tokaev's brain were valued, but the man himself was neither trusted nor allowed to give expression to his love for his native soil.

Now Stalingrad had become a scene of mass bloodshed. For the second time in Soviet history, this town, an important strategic post at one of the main gateways to the Caucasus and a bridgehead to Central Asia, was a great slaughter ground. Thirty-five German divisions, no less, were, according to official Soviet sources, being concentrated on its capture. Bombs of every sort were dropped on it, and when they were short of ammunition German aircraft actually dropped rocks, ploughs, tractor wheels—anything to damage, kill, terrorise.

The orders of the Soviet High Command were that at whatever cost Stalingrad was to be held. The difficulties facing the defenders were enormous. The Soviet armies, which were here in full retreat, demoralised, could not easily be forged into a stout defence force. Moreover, the Germans greatly outnumbered them. The width of the Volga at this point (with the Soviet forces to the east of it) further complicated the defence, and when the orders were issued Stalingrad was in flames and the object of continuous and increasing air attack. But it was clear that if the town fell, the whole Caucasus would go, cutting off the northern parts of the U.S.S.R. from its petroleum and breaking the link with the Allies through the Middle East.

Thus, in September, 1942, Stalingrad became the principal Soviet centre of war, and Pavlenko and I came to the conclusion that we could no longer stagnate in Sverdlovsk. Being of an exceptionally impetuous nature, Pavlenko went straight to the GOC of the Urals Military District and threatened suicide if he wasn't sent

to Stalingrad. He said that there was nothing more shameful for a Cossack than to stay in the rear while the enemy were ravaging his native plains, burning his beloved Stalingrad and making his womenfolk the sport of their soldiery. His commanding officer could have him arrested or shoot him, he said, for presenting such an ultimatum, but that would not kill the Cossack beliefs which ran in his blood. The next day he actually received his orders to fly to Stalingrad while I heard nothing. His delight was inexpressible. He went, he said, 'to avenge himself on Hitler for befouling his native soil'.

When we parted, just before the take-off, we both knew that he was flying to a hell from which few pilots returned, but—we were both fiery Southerners, we were bred in a centuries-old tradition which demanded of a man to pay, whatever the cost, for the honour of his country and the freedom of her children. Men born and bred in the Caucasian mountains or on the free steppes of the Kuban are warm hosts to friends but savage enemies to tyrants. This was proved in the defence of Stalingrad, which would never have been held without the people of Stalingrad.

Pavlenko wrote to tell me that the Army and the homeguard militia were no longer distinguishable from each other. There were only two kinds of soldiers in Stalingrad—German or satellite on the one side and Soviet on the other. The workers of the Stalingrad tractor factory had formed their own division. The glorious 62nd Army, under the command of General V. I. Chuikov, had dug itself in among the ruins. It had lost all semblance of a regular force; instead it had grown one with the very soil, fighting to the death. There were also the divisions of Generals Rodimtsev and Gurtiev. Sailors of the Volga river fleet constantly supplied ammunition through a barrage of fire. The British were there too, in the shape of their Hurricanes which were now coming in large numbers and were stoutly facing up to the Luftwaffe.

The weather was cold and clear. By night Stalingrad was a mammoth beacon visible for scores of miles. On one such night, Pavlenko lost, within an hour, two of his close comrades. To avenge them he took up the only craft available, an obsolete night bomber, and perished in combat. I heard of it the very day from a pilot who had flown into Sverdlovsk. In a quarter of an hour I was due to lecture, but this news paralysed my thoughts—and once again I forgot what I was about. When the orderly officer found me it was too late—the hue and cry was on again.

Immediately the lecture was over, I was summoned by Colonel-Engineer Hoddeyev, who was then acting head of the Academy

and who had a fixed antagonism to Pavlenko and myself. He told me that he was putting me under a fortnight's arrest.

'Very well, Comrade Colonel-Engineer,' I replied. 'Have you heard the news—Pavlenko has been shot down.'

'I tell you, you are under a fortnight's arrest.'

'And I tell you, we have lost Pavlenko.'

He dismissed me and that very evening had a session of the Party Bureau called to consider my new case. As before the Chairman was Makhov.

On and on he droned: 'Comrade Tokaev is an example of a good engineer who is a bad Party member. How did he happen to be late for a lecture twice running? It can only be explained by his becoming increasingly engrossed in his science and forgetting his duties as a member of the Party. Comrade Stalin has repeatedly emphasised that we do not want one-sided specialists, because every science is a Party science . . .'

At last Colonel-Engineer Mitnitsky, whom I have already mentioned, could bear it no longer. Leaping to his feet he shouted that the test of a man was a critical moment, that I had proved myself loyal to my country, I had flown to the defence of Moscow and had given exemplary service, together with my friend Pavlenko, and that I was now inhumanly overburdened with work and living uncomplainingly in frightful conditions—and there was Makhov speaking as if I were a drone. 'I protest,' he shouted, 'against such arbitrary persecution of honourable men. Yes, Comrade, I protest!' And he left the room, slamming the door behind him.

There was a moment of embarrassed silence. Then Makhov continued, but now making some mention of the positive side of my balance sheet. He felt bound, however, to suggest that I must be severely reprimanded. According to the rules, he turned to me and asked me what I had to say in my defence.

'Nothing at all, Comrade Makhov.'

'What do you mean? Your duty as a Party member is to express condemnation of your mistakes.'

'I have committed no mistake,' I said calmly, 'I was merely late for a lecture.' And I too turned my back on them and left the room.

I do not know what the consequences would have been had not the belated application to go to the front which I had made together with Pavlenko, arrived and in a most timely fashion. It was short and decisive: TO OFFICER COMMANDING ZHUKOVSKY AIR FORCE ACADEMY SVERDLOVSK STOP IMMEDIATELY DESPATCH MY DISPOSAL COMRADE TOKAEV STOP NOVIKOV GOC AIR FORCES.

The result was amusing to watch: Hoddeyev changed face more rapidly than any chameleon. The hectoring manner left him, he became wheedling. My confinement was interpreted as merely conditional.¹ And although the facts of my delinquency were as they had been, the Urals Military District Party Commission immediately discovered all manner of 'military circumstances' and again imposed on me only the slight sanction of 'attention called'.

So there I was in Moscow. But by the time I got there Novikov was absent and I saw only a subordinate official belonging to his administration, a man whom I knew well. I found him in an optimistic, warlike mood. Hitler's star was setting, he assured me. The Germans had fanned out on much too wide a front. It was the moment for successful counter-blows. And now that the Allies had landed in North Africa and the Nazis had received a drubbing at El Alamein, it was up to us to sweep them from the Soviet lands and to free the Western peoples. The Red Flag must be raised in the capitals of Europe before the Western Allies got there.

'For this,' he concluded his excited exposition, 'we need new methods of fighting, and particularly airborne troops.' Was I ready to take part in this? I was. 'Fine, Comrade Tokaev, fine.'

He said I had better stay around and wait for further instructions. I did. For some time. Then I was informed that the formation of a special airborne force had been indefinitely postponed. But I had my own sources of information, and I knew this was a lie. The force was formed, but it did not have any Tokaevs in its ranks. It consisted exclusively of officers of the State Security special force (the NKGB Airborne Infantry).

Yes, the vane of Soviet historical development had come round again full circle. The Party and Government were no longer concerned merely with winning the war, but with how they were to win it and especially with the position of their own particular organs of power.

We had come through so much and there was still so much uncertainty ahead that I was in no mood to do lip service and keep silent. I went straight to the Political Administration of the Air Force and spoke with complete frankness. Battalion Commissar Kozhevnikov admitted that there was an 'unwritten lack of confidence' in such people as myself. There was a reason for it. A number of Caucasian and near-Caucasian people had shown themselves disloyal. The Chechens, Ingushes, Balkarians, the people

¹ *i.e.* effective if there was repetition of such lateness.—*Translator.*

of Karachay, the Tatars of the Crimea and the Kalmyks had indeed fought equally against the Nazi and the Soviet 'imperialisms'. The Karachay people had openly welcomed the Germans under General Kleist and the prime mover in this astonishing act had been none other than the Chairman of the Provincial Executive Committee of the Soviets of the Karachay Autonomous Province (i.e. the local government). The Crimean Tatars were still working together with the Germans exterminating all the Russians they could, especially the Party members. There was an anti-Soviet partisan war in progress. This was why, Kozhevnikov suggested, as a prophylactic measure, members of the non-Russian peoples of the U.S.S.R. were being excluded from operations which might take them into the enemy rear.

What nonsense all the talk about the fraternity and moral-political unity of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. proved to be! We were to be trusted only when the motherland was in mortal danger. Kozhevnikov was as indignant as I was. It did not matter, he said, how much a coward a man was, so long as he was 100 per cent Russian. It did not matter what acts of heroism a non-Russian Soviet citizen might perform, nothing would save him if he had the slightest interest in his own local nationalism. In reality, said Kozhevnikov, the only faults that most of the Tatar intellectuals of the Crimea had committed were to speak openly about some extension of their local rights, to attempt to re-open mosques, and to revive certain local ways of living.

I remarked that the explanation seemed too facile. Had he not admitted that there were Crimean Tatar anti-Soviet partisans?

'Yes, yes,' he replied, 'but that has not been a feature of the Crimean Tatars alone. The Russians themselves have contributed as high a proportion of traitors as any other nation of the U.S.S.R.' He assured me that there were even German S.S. units composed of Russians. There were Russian policemen in Nazi uniform. There were numerous Russian newspapers published under the Nazis in the occupied territory. There were Russian partisan detachments operating against the Red Army. Yet the Kremlin showed no intention of punitive action against the Russians. But the Tatars were a different case.

'Why? Because their nationalism threatens not only the Soviet régime, but also the Russian nation, whatever the political régime may be.'

Kozhevnikov may have exaggerated. Yet was there not a grain of truth in what he said? I was certainly learning. For I was not merely seeing the resurgence of rule of the commissars, I was seeing

it grow up in a new, more menacing form—a form which was not non-nationally communist, but nationally, ‘racially’ Russian.

I had further confirmation of my blind-alley position, as a Caucasian, the very next day. I had called on a department of the HQ of the official Partisan movement, which was headed by Voroshilov. I found there a very old friend, a fellow-countryman from Ossetia, Hadzhi-Murat Mamsurov, a striking man, of exceptional courage, who was shortly after this promoted to Major-General and made a Hero of the Soviet Union. He had heard of the anti-Soviet action of the Ingush and Chechen peoples, but he stoutly rejected the very notion of the possibility of their punishment by annihilation as nations. No, he said, I was not to be worried, it would all end well, as soon as the war was over we should all turn up our sleeves and get to work on their political re-education, as well as that of the Crimean Tatars and the Karachayevians.

I asked what news he had of our own Ossetia. Of that, he assured me, there was no doubt, our fellow-countrymen had throughout fought valiantly and loyally. The whole countryside, with great bravery, had turned out against the enemy. I had indeed heard just the same from Gardinashvili, who relied on the statements made by Beria himself. It seems indisputable that not one people of the U.S.S.R. had so high a proportion of senior officers and men who received the supreme distinction, Hero of the Soviet Union. Such conduct is in the most ancient tradition of the Ossetians; we are a nation of warriors, even though, because we are numerically few, this may not be widely known.

I turned now to the object of my visit—to persuade Hadzhi-Murat to find me a partisan job in the enemy rear. The idea pleased him.

Then came the disillusionment. For when he rang up one of his superiors about it, I realised at once that nothing would come of the suggestion, and Mamsurov ruefully realised that there was some new, quite recent, secret instruction which barred such as me.

‘I am afraid,’ he said slowly, ‘that they will not give you permission. Perhaps it would be easier if you were not a scientist . . .’

The lack of conviction in his voice was transparent.

‘Is it only that, Hadzhi-Murat?’

‘Well . . . at least . . . that is the official reason.’

‘And the unofficial reason?’

He began to mutter. He could not make head or tail of it all. He found it hard to believe . . . What he thought now, he would not say.

But I had heard his end of that telephone conversation, and it

was not difficult to follow the gist of what had been said at the other end. I had all my life been a fanatic in at least one thing—my belief in the fraternity and equality of all peoples. Now, without the slightest trace of reason, I was suspected of chauvinistic nationalism. I was to be trusted *only far back in the Soviet rear*. I was useful because of my knowledge, because of my brain. But I was not a man whose rights equalled those of other Soviet citizens.

GENOCIDE

FINALLY, MY efforts to get into the heart of the fighting succeeded. I was appointed temporary deputy to the head engineer of the 222nd Division of the Aviation of Long-Distance Action—‘222 ADD’¹ based on the Moninsk Military Airfield near Moscow and equipped with Lend-Lease B-25c and Boston A-20 twin-engined bombers. It was busy bombing the enemy at Stalingrad, though occasionally there were other assignments as well—thus I received my bombing christening when the enemy concentrated large numbers of tanks at Rzhev.

It was in a raid in a B-25c over Stalingrad that the religious question, as it arose under the pressure of war, forced itself on my attention for the first time.

We had been intercepted by a terrific wall of enemy flak and a shell had gone clean through our right wing, fortunately without setting fire to it. The pilot turned to me for instructions. I ordered him to carry on, and explained that one of the most striking features of American aircraft was their power of survival—even if we were hit again we might still be able to go on.

‘Are you sure?’ he asked, obviously with serious misgivings.

‘Unquestionably,’ I said.

‘So we carry on?’

‘Carry on and hit the enemy.’

The reader will have noticed that our peoples’ reactions to the stresses of war are different from those of the allegedly ‘cold-blooded’ Anglo-Saxons. There was little frivolity in our language; we preferred to ease our tensions by the use of heroic or Biblical imagery. The air over Stalingrad was known as *osveshchonny ad* or ‘lighted hell’. As we came in and the lurid light of flares, tracers and ack-ack played inside the cabin, I noticed to my intense astonishment that the pilot put his thumb and first and second fingers together and crossed himself. For a Soviet pilot this was an amazing act. Once upon a time people had made the sign of the cross not only in church but on all sorts of secular occasions, to express their

¹ ADD: *Aviatsia Dalnevo Deystviva*.

sense of wonder or alarm. It had conveyed a sense of abandonment to forces beyond human cognizance. But for a quarter of a century nobody had done it except old and simple people, least of all in public or on duty.

Our bomb load discharged and our course set for home, I at last put to him the question which had been burning on my lips: did he then believe in God?

'No,' he said firmly, 'I never did and I don't now.'

'Then why did you cross yourself?'

'Damned if I know . . .' Then, thinking a moment, he added: 'War lays the heart bare.'

'Lay bare your heart, and you find God, is that it?'

'Certainly not, Engineer,' he snapped. But after another moment he said: 'All the same, it's hard to conceive of a Russian without religion, isn't it?'

I told him I agreed with him.

'That's evidently the reason,' he said, 'for the Kremlin's new liberal policy towards religion. You'll see yet, after the war, religion will become a part of daily life again.'

'And will you be sorry?'

'Not a bit. Religion and faith are organic parts of life, so there ought to be a place for them.'

What had surprised me most was that the pilot's gesture in a moment of danger had seemed completely automatic.

Shortly after this, I was told the legendary story of why it was that Stalin had changed his policy towards religion. A handful of Red Fleet sailors, at a place called Duvankoy, were holding a key transport position. They had run out of ammunition except for some hand grenades, and the enemy were sending in tanks. To make sure that each man would destroy a tank, they decided to tie the grenades to their belts and lie down in the way of the oncoming unit. But first, the Sergeant, Filchenko, called each man forward and told him to make the sign of the cross. Each of them got his tank and only one man survived by a miracle and told the story. Stalin, when he heard of this, so I was told, was above all interested in the feeling of these men for ritual. Where had they got it from? he repeatedly asked. Why did it answer a need in them at such a moment? The ritual gesture had evidently added to their strength. But if this was so, did it not mean that religion was still smouldering in the hearts of the people, *and that it could be a powerful aid in war?*

He immediately asked for information about such religious personalities as had survived the recent decades; then, without consult-

ing anybody in the Kremlin, he summoned one of them. I was never able to find out for certain who this person was, though a high-ranking Kremlin official told me in 1946 that it was the Patriarch Alexis. However this may be, Stalin asked this person a practical question: was it possible to get some churches open in a month or two? The Party and the Government would provide the necessary funds, and the moral support as well. Complete freedom of worship would be guaranteed.

This right-about-turn was a complete break with the standard Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist teaching. Religion had been banned, a generation had grown up without it; it was assumed to be a thing of the past.

The story I have told was widely accepted as the explanation for this astonishing change. My own view is that what made Stalin soften his policy towards religion was neither a platoon of Sevastopol sailors, nor yet the influence of Churchill and Roosevelt (as some people claimed). It was known to Soviet Intelligence that in the occupied zones the Germans had re-opened the churches. Throughout Belorussia, the Ukraine, the Baltic lands, as well as in a part of Russia, the bells clanged again and the churches were full. This was taken as proof of the lingering vitality of religion, and it was thought that, in freeing the country of the Germans, the Soviet forces might encounter local opposition, not only out of fear of the return of the *kolkhoz* system but also of anti-religious fanaticism and of the churches being closed again. It was to avoid the possibility of such opposition that Stalin decided to make clear that not only in the occupied areas were the churches open and the priests received support from the public authorities, but this was so, and would continue to be so, throughout the Soviet world. Except in the Baltic region, no such hostility as had been expected to the liberating Soviet troops was in fact displayed. The policy proved successful.

Here I feel that I should add something about the religious position in the U.S.S.R. The re-opening of the churches in 1943 has been taken as a sign that a liberal policy towards religion was established and that there was a great return to religion in the country. Neither of these conclusions is based on sufficient evidence. The people, under the awful stresses of war, certainly found solace in religion, but it is a long way from this to a real religious revival (such as some Western radio stations have assumed in their Russian language programmes). There is certainly a considerable total number of believers, but the number of unbelievers is immeasurably greater. Nor can it be taken for granted that a liberal policy will

necessarily continue. There have been renewed drives against religion since the war, and although they certainly point to the existence of religious feeling the possibility that they might be intensified cannot be excluded.

What it is dangerous to leave out of account is that, whatever the religious feelings of the Soviet people, the liberalisation of religious policy at that time went with a *Russianising* policy which, in its other aspects, as I will show, was anything but liberal.

The outlines of the Soviet world were indeed shifting rapidly. About this time I had a meeting with Comrade X and we discussed how we, as revolutionary democrats, were affected by the changes. When, in July, 1941, we had spoken together with our other comrades about the landslide—the sudden loss of authority of the régime and the unexpectedly increased importance of the people, particularly the Russian people; and when, later, we noted how Stalin had contrived to identify himself with the people's spontaneous spirit of resistance to the foreign enemy, even to the extent, though himself a Georgian, of calling on the shades of the past heroes of the Russians and not on those of any of the other Soviet nations, we had not at all realised how far this phenomenon would go. But now, I had only just experienced in my own person the keen sting of the new attitude of Russian dominance over the non-Russian peoples of the Union. Speaking of this, Comrade X made use of the word *Russachestvo*. I asked him to tell me what he meant by this new term. He said:

'It means that only the Russian people are decent, and all the others are scum—that is what this reactionary racial *Russachestvo* stands for.'

For us revolutionary democrats, it meant an enormous addition to our difficulties. Already, since the beginning of the war, we had had to refrain from any open action for fear lest our action against Stalin should prove to be in Hitler's favour. Now, with Stalin's identification with 'traditional' Russianism, there was the added danger that any form of anti-Stalinist activity should be thought by the people to be anti-Russian. In 1935 the ideal of the self-determination of peoples and nations had still been so alive that an expression of it had to be written into 'Stalin's' Constitution. But now everything was being done in a spirit of Russian ascendancy, and loyalty to the old idea of self-determination, which had been one of the fundamental ideas of the Revolution, could be made to appear not as loyalty to the basic ideas of the country as a whole—but as both anti-Russian and anti-Soviet. By 1945 the danger of being misunderstood was to be so great that I found

myself saying that we anti-Stalinists had better once again lie low and wait for better times.

In short, as the war drew to its close, those of us who were still anti-Stalinists and had kept our sense of the objective facts, found ourselves more and more isolated. This had some ironical results. The Air Force officers who in 1941 had tried to get me to join them in an anti-Stalin coup tried as passionately in 1944 to convince me that there could now be no reason to object to Stalin's rule. 'Stalin has opened the churches,' said one of them, 'he has dissolved the Comintern, he has set up the All-Slav Committee, his allies are the most democratic nations in the world, he relies loyally on the Russian people, he is restoring the true Russian traditions . . . What more do we want?' In 1943 and 1944 I do not think that there was a trace of opposition in the U.S.S.R. Men who had been in opposition to Stalin were even ashamed of what they had done. The stages of this decay in critical thought are instructive to trace.

Those of us who held to the old libertarian ideas of the Revolution felt an immense disgust when Stalin re-introduced officers' uniforms and ranks. One day while I was serving with the 222nd Division—a day which I remember with shame—we were marched to Chkalovskaya to take part in a great parade at the Air Force Scientific Testing Institute. One by one we were called forward and handed—epaulettes. Epaulettes, I understand, appear to British people and Americans merely a detail of some parade uniforms. In the days of fighting with sabres officers wore metal shoulder protectors and this fanciful survival is even regarded as picturesque. But in pre-revolutionary Russia, epaulettes were the symbols of Tsarist authority. Uniforms were everywhere and the epaulettes were always worn. A disparaging term for officers was 'pagonniki'—'epaulette-men'. Uniforms with epaulettes were also worn by the officers of the hated gendarmerie—as they were now to be worn by the NKVD. It was unspeakably degrading to handle these things, let alone to put them on, attached to the high-collared tunics of White Guard cut which now, in the middle of the war, we were expected to wear.

Of course, ultimately, such small things do not matter in themselves, but they are symbols of other things. That, indeed, is why such pompous official attention was accorded them. 'I congratulate you, Comrade Tokaev, on the receipt of the sacred epaulettes,' said the representative of the Supreme Command as he handed me the things, and I was obliged to make the stipulated response: 'I serve the Soviet Union.'

The morning after this disgraceful affair we were expected to

appear in our new uniforms. It was too much for me, and, foolish though the demonstration may have been, I went out dressed exactly as I was the day before. On my way to the hangar Lt.-Colonel Bachinsky, political officer of the Divisional Staff, met me.

'Comrade Major-Engineer!' He halted me. 'Why are you not in uniform?'

'And what do you think you are? Controller? Go to hell!'

'Here, not so fast, not so fast, Comrade Tokaev!'

'I have no time to waste, Comrade Bachinsky, I've got to get my aircraft ready for flight.'

'In the name of the new uniform I order you to halt!'

'Your misfortune is that your form obscures your content,'¹ I said. 'Besides, what you call the new uniform is exactly as old as the Tsarist uniform was.'

Bachinsky bit his lip and made no further attempt to argue with me, but the following morning I was summoned by the Divisional Commissar. This time I turned up in the new uniform.

'Ah, Engineer!' he greeted me. 'So all the same you've put it on.'

'And have you not yourself, Comrade Commissar?'

'I certainly have, and I am proud of the new uniform.'

'Proud of Tsarist uniform?'

He told me to be seated and began to lecture me: how dared I call the new Soviet uniform 'Tsarist uniform'? Why was I prejudiced against it? I suffered the lecture in silence. No doubt he had expected me to appear before him without the epaulettes; then he could have made a great 'case' of it. As it was, I did not get off scot-free. It was the moment for promotion, and I was supposed to be advanced from Major-Engineer to Lt.-Colonel-Engineer but when the promotion list appeared, I had been left out. My good restless tongue, my lifelong faithful friend and foe, had let me down.

Yet what was a man to do? Was he to make no protest, however slight? Was it not because throughout the land so many mutely accepted every new order from above, however reactionary, that we had drifted already so far away from the fresh air and high ideals of the revolutionary period? It was four more years before I received the advancement which was due to me.

Soon there was yet another manifestation of *Russachestvo*. We closed 1943 with the old Soviet anthem, the International, which emotionally at least had still tied us to the workers of the world. But we entered 1944 with a new hymn. I will give its literal text.

¹ Pun on *forma*, the Russian word for both 'form' and 'uniform'.

An unbreakable union of free republics
Has for all time been compacted by Great Rus!
Long live, created by the will of the peoples,
The unitary powerful Soviet Union!

Flourish our free Fatherland
Bastion of the friendship of the peoples!
May the Soviet banner, the banner of the people
Lead us from victory to victory!

Through the storms the sun of freedom shone on us,
And the great Lenin lighted our road!
Stalin brought us up true by faithfulness to the people,
By labour and great deeds did he inspire us.

Flourish, etc.

We have grown our army in battles,
We shall sweep the scurrilous conquerors from the road!
In our battles we are determining the fate of the
generations,
We are leading to the glory of the Fatherland!

Flourish, etc.

Almost in every line this hymn carries assumptions which are contrary to the progressive spirit of the Revolution. The Constitution lays down the right of any republic to separate itself from the Union. Yet the first and second lines of the hymn describe the Union as 'unbreakable' and 'for all time'. Either the association can or cannot be broken; if, as the Constitution says, it can, then it has not been compacted 'for all time'. (As for its description as a union of 'free republics', this is a mockery since the peoples of the Soviet Union did not come together by free choice at all; the essence of their position in the Union is compulsion.)

But the most objectionable words of all are perhaps *Great Rus*. What arrogance indeed to suggest that the U.S.S.R. is the work of the Russian people! 'Rus' is an historical and poetic word denoting the totality of the Russian people, not in the loose sense of people 'belonging to a country which was once called Russia', but in the precise racial sense of 'Russian humanity'. What part in all this are the Belorussians, the Ukrainians, the Georgians and all the other 'equal-right' republics supposed to have played? The matter

is made worse by the use of the adjective *great*. Russian humanity is given exactly the designation that Tsarist imperialism gave it. The word *great* in this context has been far too much discussed, derided, scornfully rejected, for it to have slipped into the hymn as merely a poetic term of speech sanctioned by past history. It is at best an affront to every non-Russian in the Union—that is to say, to the majority of the population, at worst an arrogant exhibition of chauvinism. Yet Article 123 of the Constitution is specific enough in providing for the punishment of any person who propagates racial or national discrimination or exclusivity.

Finally, there is the reference to Stalin. Every office of public authority in the U.S.S.R. is declared by the Constitution to be elective and responsible to the people. This surely means that a prime minister too is a temporary person, liable at any time to be voted out of office. This precludes his being praised in the State anthem, yet in the new hymn Stalin is thus glorified.

One could go through every line of this hymn and show up its cynical contravention of the basic laws and principles of the U.S.S.R. But from January 1st, 1944, onwards, I found myself bound to listen to it and to stand to attention and sing it on countless public occasions. It was symbolic indeed—symbolic of much that was becoming impossible in Soviet life.

Yet so gradually and perfectly had the country been conditioned that many a sensible and honourable man failed to notice what was happening. A perfect example of this was my Ukrainian friend, Major Ishchenko. He was with me on the New Year's Eve when we heard the new hymn for the first time, and when I made some caustic comments on it, Ishchenko (though soon afterwards he realised how shortsighted he had been) objected so strongly to my words that we nearly came to blows. Indeed, we had drawn our pistols and were facing each other when others intervened and prevented bloodshed. I am far from suggesting that one should argue gun in hand. On the contrary, I record the incident, against my whole background of conviction that civilised men should never resort to violence over differences of opinion, because it serves me too as a sharp reminder, useful to me on occasion in these days of exile, that life in the U.S.S.R. had indeed become insufferable.

From racial discrimination Stalin moved rapidly and with his usual crude logic to racial extermination, to genocide. The destruction of whole peoples of the U.S.S.R. by the man who had written their co-equal rights into the Constitution which still bears his name is one of the most savage crimes of the Second World War period. And here I must unfortunately add in parenthesis that

the Western Allies cannot be said to be altogether exculpated of complicity.

Nowhere to my knowledge has this crime been plainly put on paper in the Western World; when they learn of it, I do not see how people in the West will be able to face themselves again and speak of their service to humanity until they have expressed, however belatedly, their open condemnation of it. They have spoken much of the subordination of other nations to the Kremlin, it is time they spoke of the annihilation of peoples within the original Soviet frontiers.

It was from Gardinashvili that I first learned of the Politbureau decision to wipe off the map the Chechen, Ingush, Balkarian, Karachay, Crimean Tatar and Don Kalmyk countries. The whole population of these countries was to be arrested and transported to Siberia. Beria, who had come over completely to Stalin's side, was in charge of the operation, Serov was to be the commander in the field. Not one member of the Politbureau objected. Even Mikoyan sat through the session in silence, and Malenkov, who had recently announced that after the war a new life for the Soviet people would begin, accepted the decision as inevitable.

I had never seen Gardinashvili so agitated as when he told me. The NKVD forces were being supplied by the Anglo-American military representatives on the Persian frontier with Studebaker trucks and field commissariat to transport the victims. 'That these representatives did not know why we wanted this transport so urgently is impossible,' said Gardinashvili; this was a terrible disillusionment to him. 'Our Western Allies have not made the slightest protest. It amounts to their being in agreement with the Kremlin.' Many of the NKVD men were in new American uniforms.

That the men on the frontier did not know is indeed hard to believe. What they knew they must have reported. If so, to the men in London and Washington the 'liquidation' of whole peoples of the Soviet Union must have seemed an insignificant matter. After all, these people were small, almost unknown. Or had their own historical experience hardened the traditions of other rulers than ours?

In November, 1943, I had a first-hand account of the events from an Ingush Captain whom I will call Shamil. He asked to see me. I found him in civilian clothes. He was a hardened soldier, many times decorated for bravery, but when he saw me he sobbed. His next gesture was full of the symbolism of his people's tradition of personal conduct. He took out of his pocket a blood-stained cloth in which were wrapped his medals and handed them to me. 'Find

some way,' he told me, 'of delivering them straight to Stalin, or at least to the Supreme Soviet Presidium.' When this was done he would go back to the Caucasus, to fight as a partisan until he was killed. This was not histrionics. The cloth was a handkerchief stained with his own blood when he was first wounded by a German bullet; he had carried it around with him as a reminder. Now the day had come when the Caucasian soldiers who, like him, had fought for what they still thought of as 'their' U.S.S.R. were being arrested, disarmed and driven into exile.

The United Nations Convention of 1949 defining genocide says that the crime has a long history. Tsarist Russia had been guilty of it. Hitler committed genocide against the Jews. It is true that the Kremlin did not set up gas chambers and exterminate the Caucasians physically at once; but their forced expulsion, without their belongings, from the land of their fathers and their deprivation for ever of an independent life were none the less genocide. For genocide is the murder *of a people*, and every people is connected with an established habitat, where it becomes a people and a nation precisely by reason of the traditions and way of life it builds up on the basis of that habitat.

There is no justification in the argument that these people were disloyal. To the extent that they were disloyal, they were driven to it by the very conditions of latent genocide—the gradual extermination of their native way of life—in which they had already been placed. Even so, they were by no means all of them disloyal; many, like Shamil, fought loyally and heroically. Nor is it any solution for the difficulties of a modern state to wipe whole countries from the face of the earth.

As the Nazis moved out in the autumn of 1943 the NKVD moved in. The explanation given for their presence was that they were there merely to protect the petroleum fields and strategic communications. A true but secondary reason for their concentration in the Caucasus seems to have been the Kremlin's distrust of the Anglo-American forces in Iran; but the principal reason was the planned action against the North Caucasians.

Stalin struck on the eve of Red Army Day, February 23rd. Mass meetings were called. People expected the usual sort of show arranged for these occasions—speeches, the election of 'honorary presidents' of the Republic, a long lecture on the glories of the Red Army. But the opening speaker at each assembly curtly informed his listeners that they were surrounded by NKVD forces and that the slightest sign of resistance would be met with instant shooting. If necessary they would all be mown down by machine-guns.

In one village I know, guards stepped to the speaker's side, their automatics trained on the crowd. A few brave souls rushed forward and were instantly shot down. Others tried to escape and the same fate met them. Pistol in one hand, paper in the other, the speaker, an NKVD Colonel, read out the charge of collaboration with the Germans, of treachery. There were shouts of 'Lies, we fought the Germans' and a wave of indignation swept through the hall. But the orders were to strike swiftly, making no exceptions. It was announced that the whole population would be deported and their land become State property. There was a confusion of wailing and sobbing. A tall man of twenty-seven in a Red Army Major's uniform with decorations on his breast and one sleeve stitched to his tunic stepped forward. Before he could be stopped he tore off his medals and flung them on the ground; while his hand was fumbling with his epaulettes the Colonel shot him. As machine-guns clattered, finishing him off, another war-disabled man shouted: 'Brothers, you have seen for yourselves that I, a son of our people, shed my blood for the Union. We had nothing to do with the Nazis . . .' He was still speaking when the machine-guns stuttered again and he fell.

The operation was beautifully planned. All communications were immediately in the hands of the NKVD. Not a word was allowed to escape, not merely to the outside world but even into the U.S.S.R. A few weeks later I was able to get to a neighbouring country (in the U.S.S.R.). I found that they knew absolutely nothing. Even to this day the heart of the U.S.S.R. knows nothing of what happened. Only a few highly placed officials in the Kremlin knew. It is characteristic of the perfect execution of this crime that it was not till 1954 that a single victim of it managed to escape to the Western world—and as far as I know he remains the only one.

Throughout the region the deportation was carried out with unbelievable savagery. Men were taken separately, children separately, women separately. Throughout that night, it was a free-for-all with the women for the NKVD; more than that, the men were urged to rape, and the argument was actually used that since these nations were to disappear for ever the women might as well start at once bearing the offspring of true Stalinists.

It was a cold February. The deportees were loaded into unheated cattle trucks. An endless line of goods-trains crept along the railways. They halted only in deserted places in the steppes; at each halt the armed guards opened the doors of the wagons and threw out the corpses of those who had already died of cold, starvation or the excesses of the NKVD. Then, all together, men, women

and children, were given so many minutes to ease nature. Consideration for decency was hardly to be expected.

The trains moved like snails, the journey was endless; the guards were well fed, the passengers were starving. Mothers smothered their children to end their sufferings, men killed their wives, sisters, daughters, to save them from further shame at the hands of the NKVD. Perhaps even Hitler's factory methods of genocide were more humane?

When they reached the lower Volga, the survivors were ordered from the trains which were needed for other work. From then on they were marched through sparsely peopled country, avoiding human habitation, to Siberia, two thousand miles away. And as they journeyed, wherever husband had found wife, they were again separated, and though in theory, on paper, these peoples were merely 'deported', in fact it was ensured that they would never breed again as peoples, but should be swept, as if by natural forces, from the world for ever.

In the ravaged country they had left I found the animals neglected, the livestock starving and dying. Bewildered at the sight of man, each of them cried out in its own way. It was a scene of desolation such as wars rarely leave behind them.

There had been no trial, no appeal, no evidence. These people had been caught between Stalin's fear of their aspirations towards independence, his fear that, living on the border, they might go over to the Anglo-Americans in Iran, and the tragic, criminal inertia of those whom, as it turned out, he had feared quite needlessly since they were determined to be only detached observers. When in 1947 I spoke of what had happened to some people from the West they shrugged their shoulders non-committally and said that such 'punitive action' was an internal matter and that after all Stalin's victims were *not* innocent as Hitler's had been: had I not admitted that they had taken advantage of the war to declare against the Stalin régime? Certainly some of them had done so, but to visit their crime of disloyalty on every man, woman and child, to wipe out the whole nation, was punishment in savage excess of what was needed.

In fact it was not merely the mutiny of part of these North Caucasians that inspired the Kremlin. This was only an excuse to settle an old score. The first suggestion of destroying these peoples, *who were made up exclusively of Moslems*, was apparently made by Stalin not after, but *before the war*, when, in fact, *Russachestvo*, the notion of Russian superiority, was born. This attitude of mind was illustrated by some of the incidents of my journey to the depopu-

lated regions just when they were beginning to be settled with Russians, in the summer of 1944. It was Gardinashvili who arranged for me to go to these officially out-of-bounds areas. I was sent, officially, for a month at the Rest House of the Ministry of Defence at Kislovodsk. There I met an old North Caucasian friend of mine, Major Kurdzhiev, who belonged to the Ministry of State Security, and it was with his connivance and advice that I made a survey in order to report to Moscow (in accordance with my instructions) on the way the remaining population and the new settlers were taking the recent events. In the Ingush country I was received by one Zenofontov, the local Party boss. He explained that he had come from the Province of Kursk, in Central Russia; the Party and Government had rewarded him for his war-time services with a handsome house, the property of a departed Ingush. It was a roomy, well-constructed edifice of two floors, with spacious attics. It stood in a broad compound which included an excellent mixed orchard. It was well furnished.

'You got all this free?' I asked him, in apparently naïve surprise.

'Of course.'

And how did he and his fellows like the new life? He purred with satisfaction; they had nothing to complain of; they had been miserably poor, now they were well off.

Zenofontov did not suspect that I was Caucasian-born; I was merely a big-shot from Moscow, making a special enquiry for Comrade Malenkov. He opened his heart. 'After all,' he said, 'we Russians suffered a lot, we have some right to a better time now, and that's why the Party and Government have sent us here.' Then he went on calmly to say that 'after all was said and done, Russia did not conquer the North Caucasus to let some sort of natives go on living there'. If he were in Stalin's place he would clean up Dagestan, North Ossetia and Kabardia too—'make a clean sweep of the whole Northern Caucasus'. 'At the best these peoples are bound to be a thorn in our flesh and the sooner we get it out the better. No doubt it's a bit hard on them, but do we Russians have an easy life? They've had their time in the sunshine, now let the Russians have a turn. . . . Do you remember what Comrade Kirov used to say?—that Russia needs the Caucasus for its petroleum and grain. Well, Russia is the great majority of the U.S.S.R., isn't it? So if we're going to be good democrats, what we Russians want comes first.'

He continued for some time in this strain. References to the Ingush people were rare, and invariably scornful. He was not an

exceptional villain, merely a small, ordinary man, infected by Russianism.

A far worse case of the new racial disease was the Secretary of the North-Ossetian Party Committee, O. Tz. Dauév, whom I saw a few days later. Here was a man of my own race, not a Russian at all, a man whom I had known since childhood. He made no secret to me of the fact that he had driven his official car home a number of times packed with valuable household fittings from the homes of former Ingush Party comrades, and when I reminded him of the communist ties which should have made him hesitate, his reply was: 'Yes, yesterday's comrades, now enemies of the people, pro-Nazis. I don't mind saying I was glad to hear they had been deported.'

'Why? What harm had they done you?'

'The Chechens and the Ingushes,' he said, 'always have been disturbers of the peace, incorrigible haters of the Soviet régime. They always stood in the way of a true settlement between the Caucasus and Russia, and it was time that was ended once and for all.'

He enlarged on this in some detail. He saw blood relationship between Russians, Ossetians and Georgians. We were all Christians together—those others had been Moslems. The Trans-Caucasian Ossetians were a link between the North Ossetians and the Georgians. The two countries shared between them the only communication line across the Caucasian range. Our interests were identical. Besides, the Ossetia of today was thoroughly intermixed with Cosacks of Russian origin so that Ossetians were half Russian in their culture. In other words he welcomed the termination of a process started under the Tsars. Catherine II had said that the Caucasus was the knees of Russia, and must be under Russian control. In 1771 she wrote to General de Medem telling him that disputes between the Caucasian peoples should be fostered to facilitate Russian mastery. In 1807 General Gudovich, Tsarist 'Vice-Emperor' in the Caucasus, sending General Bulgakov against the Caucasian peoples, ordered him to inflame the Kabardians against the Chechens. In 1904 General Tzitzianov issued orders to 'Punish and cut down the Ossetians without mercy, burning their dwellings and forcing them to take the oath of loyalty.' And when a great Caucasian leader, Shamil, arose, Nicholas I ordered the destruction of dwellings and food supplies to conquer him and his forces. Now, while the attention of the U.S.S.R. and of the world was concentrated on the Ukraine and Belorussia and the relentless pressure of the Soviet armies on the flagging Nazi forces, now was the moment

finally to destroy the rebellious spirit of the Caucasians. General Serov, in whose hands Stalin had placed the task, was regarded by many as the Tzitzianov of the modern age. Kurdzhiev had already told me that 'the mere sight of a Caucasian not only hurt Serov's eyes but even made his heels itch'.

Serov is a Russian with an inborn hatred of the peoples of the Caucasus, that hatred, which has come to the boil after simmering for well over a century, hatred of a country which possesses all the minerals that Russia lacks and which is the ancient homeland of a medley of small, turbulent peoples whose spirit is far more independent than that of the people of the plains. The fact that some of us were Moslem and of these some were actually Turkish-speaking, added to this hatred, for the war found lurking even in the hearts of Russian atheists the obscure feeling that it was right for them to force their faith, their 'culture' and their rule on the non-Orthodox. 'In Serov's view,' as Kurdzhiev said, 'and he has expressed it at conferences with complete frankness, the Caucasian traditions represent a great danger to Russia, and must therefore be extirpated.'

It was in the summer of 1944 that the Kremlin began the re-settlement of the vacated lands. Mosques were turned into barns; museums which had contained objects of rare ethnographical interest and enormous sentimental value to the true inhabitants were gutted, their contents scattered or destroyed, and in place of the treasures of the old Caucasian life there appeared—relics of Holy Russia. Another historical lie was being built up. A visitor from another planet—or a child born to the new inhabitants—would get the impression that these lands had always been the home of Russians!

I have already shown how some Russian settlers reacted to the situation. It was not the same with all of them; many of them had misgivings—but unfortunately that was all they had, so firmly planted in them was the belief that what the Kremlin ordained was right. An old peasant said to me: 'I had never dreamt of being so well off, but yet there's a bit of shame in settling in somebody else's house. I suppose the poor little children of the man who owned all this are dead now of cold and starvation. I do feel as if I had taken his property by force. But as God must see, I am not to blame.'

I asked him what prevented him—if he felt so uneasy—from renouncing what was really not his.

'Refuse the gift?' he replied. 'Oh, that I cannot do. How can I, once our Government has decided? We've a decent Government

which looks after us. Besides, how is a simple old man like myself to get to those on top in Moscow?’

‘You need not go to Moscow yourself,’ I said. ‘I am here now as an official representative of Moscow; you can make your protest to me if you like.’

‘No, Comrade *Nachalnik*,’ he said, ‘I won’t do that, but if you are an official and going back to Moscow, what I will do is ask you to give the Government my respects and say a good thank-you to Comrade Stalin for his care of us.’

There were even men who were indignant, and one told me that a crime had been committed, but to report his words would have been to ruin him without changing the situation by one iota; his chief fear now was that the newcomers would not get on with the remaining (Orthodox) Caucasians; but to repeat his words in Moscow would merely expose these Caucasians (among them my fellow Ossetians) to the danger of further genocide.

One of the most interesting—most sensitive—barometers was the attitude of the Cossack population. As I have explained in the first volume of my memoirs, the Cossacks, though they have been influenced in their way of life by the Southern peoples among whom they lived, are Russian by origin and are certainly regarded as Russians by the Kremlin. If any untouched Caucasian people had tended to accept the genocide and resettlement (apart from Party bosses) it would surely have been these men of Russian origin, but I found them most alarmed.

Coming to Georgievsk I showed my travel permit to the authorities and was given transport to a Cossack settlement in the Ordzhonikidze district. Kurdzhiev had given me a letter of introduction to a local cossack, Kucherenko, a Party officer and the head of the *kolkhoz*. He and I had acquaintances in common both in Moscow and in the neighbouring towns, so I was able to gain his confidence and get a frank account of the situation. Wherever we went I saw that men and women alike showed him great respect and his least command was at once obeyed. He was proud of his staff. ‘The women are real heroines. While the Germans were here, not one of them could be made to work, but the moment the enemy had gone they were at it.’ He called to one of them, Marya, to come and speak to me. Her husband was a colonel in Pliev’s guard corps, he had been in the fighting from the outset and had been wounded and decorated several times; the two of them were leading personalities of the *kolkhoz*.

‘Of course, you are a Party member,’ I said.

'Just what I'm not,' she replied; 'what damn use would the Party be to me? Nor is my husband a Party member.'

'Just a non-Party bolshevik, eh?'

'Just Marya Nikolayevna, that's me'—her voice expressed a mixture of humour and irritation. 'There's never been a Party member in our family; we've always managed without, and always will.'

Had she any grouse against the Party, I asked. She did not quite know what to say. Then out it came: 'If the Party was worth anything, why did it arrest all the Karachay and the Balkarian people, and, as I hear, the Chechens too? The whole nation, I tell you. Women and children and all. Now why, I ask you?' And her hard eyes glinted.

I side-stepped by asking what the other women had to say. She called one over. 'Lolia,' she said, 'this is Comrade Tokaev, all the way from Moscow to see us. Now you tell him how delighted you were they arrested the Karachay and Balkar folk . . .'

Lolia, a gaunt, poorly dressed woman with a drawn face, lowered her eyes. 'I saw it all,' she said. 'It was awful. The political police rounded us all up. Days and nights they questioned us brutally—why had we not fled when the Germans came, why had we not killed any Germans. We were kept in an enclosure behind barbed wire, out in the open. All at once we noticed a strange noise in the night, just like an enormous swarm of bees a long way off. Little by little it grew louder and nearer, till we found it was the weeping and groaning of thousands and thousands of men, women and children. That's the truth of it, it was the Karachayans, and as they were driven on they wept and wailed, and when they were loaded into trucks and the trains moved off, the noise of it was unbearable.'

Tears trickled down this Cossack woman's weather-beaten face. She said she had heard much weeping in her life, and herself had wept not a little, but the weeping of a whole nation was so different from any other weeping she had heard that no words could describe it. 'After that,' she said, 'we stopped being frightened for ourselves.' Ever since they had been rounded up for questioning she and the other women had been terrified, but now their fears seemed to be as nothing. And when an NKVD man took a Karachay girl and stripped her and raped her in front of them all, they howled at him in their disgust and rage; but while the girl lost consciousness and lay limp at his feet, he turned to them, his trousers still down, and taunted them obscenely.

I asked Kucherenko if he could call for a break in the field

work. I wanted to talk to them all. It was a half-hour packed with frank Cossack talk, and three-quarters of it was about the nations which had been destroyed. Before coming to the settlement I had myself expected the Cossacks to be apathetic to the fate of those whom, in peace-time, they had rather scorned as 'different and Moslem'. But how greatly I had underestimated the passion for liberty which made them so alive to the rights and needs of others!

If this was the reaction of the Cossacks, it had to be imagined what the surviving, Orthodox but non-Russian peoples in the Caucasus were feeling. They lived—they may still be living—in daily fear. So little trust had they in the Kremlin and its policy that the question in their minds was not even whether, but *when* the same fate as that of the Moslems would overtake them.

From Kurdzhiev I had learned that an old friend of mine, Tambi Ibrahimov, reported killed on the Southern Front, was in fact alive. When the news had reached him of the genocide he had planted his identification papers on a fallen comrade and was now in the mountains as a partisan—or rather, as he frankly said, a bandit, with no political programme, no hope, only the intention to kill as many Russians as possible and revenge some of his kinsmen before he died.

A meeting with Tambi was arranged for me. I went to him at night, to a hut deep in the forest. I waited for him in the darkness. At last—'Grisha' I heard—'Tambi'. We had not met for years. He buried his head on my chest and cried. My own eyes were not dry. This, I knew, was a man who had distinguished himself in hand-to-hand fighting against the Nazis. He had been decorated by Stalin. His honour and courage were unquestionable. Yet to what lengths he had been driven by the organised genocide.

I argued with Tambi. It was not enough for him and his handful of comrades, I said, to live in highland aeries as bandits. Not to rise above mere racial revenge was to sink to the level of Stalin and Serov, to the level of Tsarism-Stalinism. His struggle must be constructive.

'What would you have us fight against?' he asked.

'Against Soviet imperialism.'

He agreed, at least in theory. But we were saddened by the memory of our youth when we had been revolutionary idealists together, fierce protagonists of the Soviet paradise. Our ideals had not changed, and yet here we were, forced to plan anti-Soviet partisan fighting.

When, at break of day, we parted, I asked him if I could tell Comrade X that he would do his best to stop mere anti-Russian excesses by his partisans. But he shook his head. He would do all that we had agreed to give the struggle a constructive direction, but this last demand I was not to make of them—they must also reserve to themselves the sacred right of revenge.

I gave up trying. But it was bitter to me that even my friend Tambi was infected by this racial virus. He had been one of the purest of Soviet internationalists. But by 1944 internationalism in the Soviet Union had been destroyed.

My last news of Tambi reached me in 1947. The partisan war was still unquenched. The difficulties of the partisans were immense but the war would trickle on, a never-healing sore in the Russian imperial flesh. In his message Tambi asked me to tell Malenkov that he and his comrades might even have forgiven the destruction of their nations; what they could never forgive was the degradation of their womenfolk. I was never able to give this message to Malenkov, but it reached Beria through Gardinashvili. Beria must certainly have known that Tambi's letter had come through my hands, but to his honour I must say that he never took steps against my friends or myself. Beria had many faults and betrayed many hopes, nevertheless it was a blow for me when in 1953 he was suddenly arrested and shot.

Can a nation be exterminated? Physically, yes. There are too few Ingushes, Chechens, Karachayans, Balkarians, Crimean Tatars or Caucasian Kalmyks alive today for there to be any serious likelihood of these nations ever being reconstituted. In this sense they have been exterminated, more completely than the Jews by Hitler. It was genocide in the fullest meaning of the word.

But there is another side to it and without it one could not live on: spiritually, these peoples will live; indeed, they will never die now, just because of the enormity, the arbitrariness, the brutality of the organised crime against them. Wherever there are decent Russians who know—and such of course there are—the seeds of a new and better way of living must exist.

During my Caucasian visit I stayed with a retired, disabled Russian colonel named Kochotov. He was the uneasy recipient of an excellent house in a large Ingush village. He took me for a walk to show me why he was unhappy. We were alone, nobody was within earshot.

'I am already getting on in years,' he said, 'I have long been in the Party, so it is not seemly for me to lie to you or to my conscience: this act is something alien to what you and I have believed

in. Politically and psychologically, it has been a grave error.' He pointed to a large field cut into the hillside and levelled as if by bulldozers. All around it was uncultivated moorland but this area was freshly rough-ploughed. His voice was suddenly hushed. 'This was their graveyard,' he said, 'an Ingush graveyard. It has been levelled like this to stamp out even the traces of their graves. The gravestones have been taken away to be used for building. Tell me: how did this benefit socialism?'

'Do you believe in God?' I asked him.

'I once did: I do so no longer.'

In the simplicity of his soul he could not believe that God, if God existed, could have allowed this.

Once again I emphasise, even in face of this horror done in the name of the Russians, that I do not accuse the Russians. The heart of the Russian people is sound; despite the facile doctrine that a people has the rulers it deserves, it is the false rulers of the Russians and of other Soviet peoples who have done this, the rulers who betrayed the Revolution.

Indeed the Russian people are innocent. For, because of the vastness of the Soviet Union, and the fact that all information is centralised, they still do not know the truth of what has been done in their name. It was not till June 28th, 1946, nearly three years later, that they learned anything about it at all, and then only the bare facts of the slaughter, accompanied by a lying explanation. It was left to the Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Socialist Federal Republic, then Bakhmurov, to make the announcement.

'Comrades,' he said, '*the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR places before you for confirmation the draft of a law to abolish the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and for the transformation of the Crimean ASSR into the Crimean Province . . . During the Great Fatherland War, when the peoples of the U.S.S.R. were heroically defending the honour and independence of their Fatherland in the struggle against the German-Fascist conquerors, many Chechens and Crimean Tatars, giving ear to German agents, entered volunteer units organised by the Germans and together with the German armies fought against units of the Red Army. On German instructions, they set up saboteur bands for the struggle against the Soviet régime in the rear. The main body of the population of the Chechen-Ingush and Crimean Tatar ASSR's offered no resistance to these traitors to the Fatherland. For this reason the Chechens and Crimean Tatars have been transported to other parts of the Soviet Union. In the new regions they have been given land as well as the requisite State*

assistance for their economic establishment. On the suggestion of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR by Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic has been abolished and the Crimean Autonomous Province transformed into the Crimean Province.'

The necessary amendments were made to Article 14 of the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. It is to be wondered whether constitutional lawyers know of any example of gerrymandering which can be compared with this proposal to vote on a draft bill for a law to cover a crime which had been irreparably committed two and a half years previously.

It remains to dot one or two i's. While this genocide was being carried out there was a special sitting of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. at which important speeches were made about the new 'all-world and historical' fraternity and mutual understanding of the nations. Molotov spoke at great length, not about genocide, but about the new claim, that various non-Russian parts of the U.S.S.R. should have the prerogatives of independent states, since they already enjoyed such full constitutional rights. Two birds were being killed with one stone: a smoke-screen was being put up to prevent the slightest glimpse of the genocide and—the U.S.S.R. in the United Nations was staking its claim for a multiple vote.

There was one other striking manifestation of the new attitude towards non-Russian peoples at the end of the war when the All-Slav Committee was formed in Moscow. The work of foundation was entrusted, characteristically, to a General of Russian origin, Gundurov. To Western editors the matter seemed childishly simple: the Soviet Union, which was 'of course' really Russia, was out to cultivate the sympathy and support of the Poles, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Macedonians, and Lusatian Sorbs—that is to say, all the peoples of Europe who, speaking languages closely allied to Russian, are classified as 'Slav nations' by a primitive racialist view of ethnography. The arrogant nature of the assumption that it was for the U.S.S.R. officially to found such a committee was entirely ignored. For the U.S.S.R., it cannot too often be repeated, is neither juridically nor factually (by count of polls) a Russian state, or even a Slav state. Together the Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians do indeed constitute a majority of the population (though not by a very large margin), but this still does not make the U.S.S.R. a Slav state. Still less is it a Russian state.

The Soviet Union, a country in which even the three Slav nations taken together (Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians) are only

just a majority, and which had just murdered some of its own non-Russian nations, was opening its arms to the Slav nations of the world. But to the West it only looked as if 'Russia' was, very naturally, cultivating the friendship of other near-Russian countries.

START OF THE COLD WAR

AFTER MY last Caucasian visit, I came back to the Zhukovsky Academy, which at the end of the war returned to its Moscow home, and there, at my scientific work, I remained until, shortly after that astonishing landmark, the Yalta Conference, I was sent to Berlin by Stalin. I was Reader in Aerodynamics of Flight in the Faculty of Special Aircraft Equipment, a most exhausting post. I was Professor of Aviation at the Moscow Engineering Institute, and I was also now a member of the Scientific Council, a body governing higher policy in all scientific matters in the Academy.

Throughout this period (1944 and 1945) whatever free time I had was at the service of my revolutionary democrat comrades. I specialised on the nationalities question. After the Caucasian genocide it was the possibility of eventual return to greater self-determination which we regarded as one of the most important questions for our country.

Looking back, I see Yalta as a great climacteric. The decisions taken there—or rather, I would say, allowed by Roosevelt and Churchill—were to shape the coming generation. But first the western regions of the U.S.S.R. had to be liberated, and that process inevitably raised all-absorbing problems. The undercurrent of Soviet unrest, the revolt of the Kremlin's 'subject peoples', was certainly not terminated by the gruesome events of the Caucasus. As the Soviet armies pushed westwards and the 'liberation' of the Belorussians and Ukrainians began, these peoples were faced again in an acute form with the problem which we revolutionary democrats faced in 1941: which came first, Hitler or Stalin?

The Belorussians, living between Russia and Poland, speak a language which is neither Polish nor Russian but something in between. They are highly conscious of their separate national identity; it was in deference to this that Moscow had, soon after the Revolution, admitted the paper existence of a 'separate' Belorussian state. The Ukrainians, better known to the Western world, also have their own distinct language and culture and have, for generations, resisted the attempts to Russianise them.

Among the friends with whom I spent the New Year's Eve of

1944, was Grabar, the Secretary of an important Belorussian Town Party Committee; he said that it was hard to tell whether his countrymen were fighting more against the Nazis or the Soviet régime. (He was thinking of the partisan movement.) Konovaletz, who was present, argued that the Belorussians were so sickened by the Nazi excesses that they must, on the contrary, be ready to welcome the return of the Red Army. But Grabar was in a better position to know and he said quietly that according to his information, three out of four Belorussians 'had reasons to be apprehensive of the Red Army'. Here Konovaletz protested that while he felt the greatest sympathy with the Belorussians' will to independence, it was surely evident 'that we must smash Hitler first'.

How well I remember Grabar's solemn words: 'Then it will be too late. My fear is that it is too late already. Once Belorussia and the Ukraine are in the rear of the Soviet forces marching against Germany, it will be all over with their dream of independence.' Grabar was not an anti-communist. He believed fervently in the ideals of Marx, Engels and Lenin. What his attitude represented came to be known later as Titoism—a communism determined to work out its forms in accordance with the national spirit of any particular 'people's democracy'. I do not agree with this attitude, I believe that national communism is not a solution of the problems of today. But where Grabar was right—though at the time I thought him unduly pessimistic—was in his statement: 'The war is becoming increasingly a war of Russian-Imperialism, and its upshot will be that the non-Russian peoples not only will not gain, but will lose such independence as they had before.'

We were all profoundly troubled by this question as we saw the Russian pageant moving on its way. Stalin had recently assumed the title of Marshal and received the Order of Suvorov. Some of us had eased our consciences by sending him an anonymous letter of protest. We began with the usual congratulations; then we drew his attention to the fact that by destroying the flower of the Party and the senior officers of the armed services in the thirties just before the war, he was responsible for the initial Soviet setbacks, and that the successes of the enemy proved how little he deserved the Order of Suvorov; finally, we expressed our conviction that after the enemy had been defeated, he should face a people's court. Whether the letter ever reached him, I do not know; it certainly got as far as his secretary-adjutant, Major-General Poskrobyshev.

Of course this was nothing but a gesture. But what more could we do? Our leaders were scattered and the interruption of our efforts at resistance since the beginning of the war made them

the more difficult to resume. I insisted on discussing the question with Zamrug, but he was taken by surprise and said that he ought first to consult the Leningrad comrades. I urged him, however, to reply frankly to my question: whether he shared the view of some of us that the moment had now come to turn bombers, tanks and bayonets against the Kremlin.

'Emphatically not,' he said. 'The Soviet peoples, above all the Russians, individually and as a mass, from top to bottom, adult and adolescent, are smouldering with one desire: to smash the Germans, to raise the Red Flag on the Reichstag building, then to occupy the whole of Europe and triumph in an unheard-of wave of expansion. And that mass madness means that anyone who makes the slightest attempt to stand in their path will be trampled underfoot in the twinkling of an eye!'

Such indeed was the mass mood. How far behind us were the days when we were taught to distinguish between the Germans and the Nazis. Now racial hatred ruled. The urge to reach Berlin did not any longer come from anti-fascism. In some people the new frenzy was doubtless only the reaction from the unbearable depression of invasion, occupation and near-defeat, but the general hysteria was more than this.

One evening in the second week of February a young scientist, Major Finkelstein, came to see me. Before the war he had been a level-headed critic of the Soviet régime and a sympathiser with, though never a member of, our movement. He was just back from the front. He had not been five minutes in my flat before he brandished his transfer to a *guards* regiment. Guards? Here was another word previously identified with Tsarism! 'I haven't got my badge yet,' he said proudly, 'but I'll have it in a day or two.' Picked men were being drafted into special units where pay was higher, clothing and equipment better, food more lavish; these units were to wear special guards insignia. Even their regimental colours were of a special kind.¹

I asked Finkelstein if he had seen anything of our mutual friend Mamsurov, who, like him, was fighting on the First Ukrainian Front. Oh no, he said airily, he had not seen him recently; Mamsurov wasn't in the guards. 'We guards, my dear chap,' he laughed, 'do try to keep a bit to ourselves.' He explained that humdrum fighting was for ordinary units, 'we guards are reserved for special tasks. We are on the look-out for big deeds—somewhere, you know, beyond the old frontiers. . . .'

¹ Colours for the various army units were introduced by a decree of February 6th, 1944.

On March 6th the Red Army cut the Odessa-Lvov railway, three days later it entered Tarnopol, crossed the Dniester on the 19th and, by April 8th, reached the Eastern frontier of Czechoslovakia.

Now it was no longer only Belorussians or Ukrainians who wondered what their fate would be. Fearfully, our thoughts turned to that shameful September 17th, 1939, when the Red Army had thrust westward into Poland. But at that time the Soviet Union had not been the ally of the Western Democracies. How would the British, who had declared war on Hitler in 1939 to redeem their promise to Poland, how would the Americans now advise their ally, the U.S.S.R., in her conduct towards Poland and Czechoslovakia which she was 'liberating'?

The answer was not long in coming. Sumner Welles, in an article which was given wide publicity in the U.S.S.R. said that the 'Polish question'—that is to say, the question of restoring Poland—was 'being postponed', not to upset Moscow. My friends and I had become great admirers of the United States. There was much for us to admire in their courage and generosity. But this was totally unexpected. To us it was a moral stab in the back. What could it mean? Were the Americans blind, or indifferent, to the sort of assistance and 'liberation' which the U.S.S.R. had afforded Finland, Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania? Were the responsible men of the State Department ignorant of the doctrines of world revolution which the Kremlin, since before the war, had been twisting to its own purposes?

But the further we read the more astonished were we. No country, was Sumner Welles's argument, could do more to assist the post-war settlement than Poland by a 'humane and organised transfer of population'. This was monstrous! To suit Stalin, here was democratic America, so proud of its attachment to the rights of peoples and even of individuals, openly proposing yet another mass deportation. What ethical distinction was there between the deportation of Baltic states citizens under Soviet orders and the deportation of much larger masses of Poles and Germans under the proposed aegis of the U.S.A.?

In the light of that statement it became easier to understand why America had not given more support to the heroic Polish rising under Bor-Komarovski. It was a reminder to us in the U.S.S.R. that we had only our own strength to count on, that we must never, never, trust to outside forces. If a nation such as Poland could be thus betrayed, what support could we expect for the non-Russian peoples within the Soviet Union? We did not forget the material aid which America had given us. As an engineer



General Stalin, son of the late dictator



General Serov (*right*) shown with a military friend

of our Long Distance Air Division which was completely equipped by the U.S.A., I am not likely to forget that debt to the American nation. From 1941 to 1944 the U.S.S.R. received 7,437 million dollars from the U.S.A., which included 3,792 million dollars' worth of equipment. But I am also not likely to forget the political betrayals.

The culminating point of this betrayal was the astonishing Yalta Conference between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin. The conclusion we reached at an underground conference we held about that time was forced upon us by the cynical decisions taken at Yalta. We agreed that:

(a) The policy of the U.S.A. and to some extent of Britain towards the East European countries enslaved by the Nazis was becoming increasingly ambiguous and appeared to be a policy of capitulation, since it was not aimed at reconstituting the independence of these countries, and particularly of Poland, immediately upon the expulsion of the Nazis.

(b) The policy of occupation, reparations and acquisition of labour at the cost of the German people was in sharp conflict with the basic interests of world peace and we therefore rejected it.

We felt that if the U.S.S.R. had been a country of tyranny before the Yalta Conference, it had been made doubly so at Yalta by the approval of the United States and Britain. Senator McCarthy would call me a communist. But what did the leading statesmen in America who today (rightly) dub the Yalta decisions criminal and treacherous, what did those men say at the time? Disillusionment has etched their words deeply on our memory. Mr. Drew said that the Yalta declaration was one of the greatest of forward steps towards the creation of a lasting peace. Mr. Douglas said that the results of the Yalta Conference had exceeded the most optimistic American hopes. Mr. Davis, who had been American Ambassador to Moscow and might have known better, said that the Yalta decisions brought life and hope to millions, and were the basis for a worthy, safe and just international community. Orthodox Stalinists now had only to quote against us the American press.

How lightly did the Western world approach our problems! A man whom I shall call Pegovsky quoted at our conference this conversation he had had with an American: 'How is it that a great democracy like America panders in this way to Stalin?'—'It's because we Americans like you Russkies.'—'And do you like the Poles?'—'Oh, I really don't think that the Polish question is so important. Anyway, we certainly don't mean it to be a bone of contention between us and our Russian friends.'

It is a puzzle to us to this day how serious men in responsible positions could speak so frivolously on such serious matters.

When later, in Berlin, I told high-ranking British and American officers what had happened in the Caucasus, all they did was to shrug their shoulders and say calmly: 'But that is an internal matter for you Russians.' I don't need telling that to report on such a matter may not have been within their terms of reference: but surely even an officer has terms of reference not only as an officer but also as a human being. Admittedly the revolutionary democrats of the U.S.S.R. have not so far overthrown the Kremlin, but at least, at risk of life and liberty, they try; and at least, they do get at the facts and they try to make them known. Yet, in the infinitely easier conditions of the West, I do not think that one man in a thousand realises either what the criminal record of the Kremlin is in regard to the non-Russian peoples, or how great the guilt of Washington and London has been in giving it their moral backing and—perhaps to cover their own war-time mistakes—in maintaining the conspiracy of silence.

Nineteen-forty-five saw a new shift in the Kremlin's policy. The cold war began—ironically enough, fostered, stimulated by the blundering and cynicism of Western statesmen. We were bewildered by their attitude. Even if the statesmen knew no Russian and disliked wading through translations, surely those who briefed them might have put before them at the very least a précis of that frank handbook compiled of Stalin's pronouncements and called *Questions of Leninism*—it lays down that the U.S.S.R. is the foundation on which the ideal form of the grouping of the nations must be built; or of that Soviet Bible, the *Short Course of the History of the Soviet Communist Party*, which states (p. 261, 1941, Russian edition): 'It is clear that to eliminate the danger of capitalist intervention we need to eliminate the capitalist encirclement.' Did these statesmen, or their assistants, never read the Soviet press? At the time when American official and private personalities were showering compliments on the U.S.S.R., *Izvestia*¹ wrote: '... the appearance of the Red Army on the territory of Germany excites in us Slavs also other ideas and feelings. The soil now occupied by the Red Army in Germany is not just so much enemy territory. East Prussia, Pomerania, Brandenburg, Prussian Silesia are all ancient Slav lands. Precisely here, in Slav Branibor (as Brandenburg was once called) and in Berlin (also a Slavonic name) the Germans created their principal bases . . . And now the Russians, the Red Army,

¹ *Izvestia*—the government newspaper, *Pravda* the Party paper.—Translator.

again set foot on this ancient Slav soil. It has come there not merely as a liberating army, but also as an avenging army.'

How clear this imperialistic talk was to us. In 1917 the Revolution had proclaimed the self-determination of peoples, and—for a brief time—the imperial Russia of the Muscovite rulers had ceased to exist. In 1918 only central Russia proper was ruled by Moscow. But almost immediately the work of recapturing the 'lost territories' and of further expansion was begun, a work in which, in my opinion, the Russian people played no active part, merely acquiescing in the conquests forced on them. By 1926 the country had been reconstituted within its old 'Russian' frontiers. I did not see the meaning of the process then. I still believed that the principles which the Revolution had proclaimed would one day become a fact and that the Union would become a real fraternity of nations. Gradually my disillusionment deepened. On the eve of the Second World War the Kremlin started on the second stage of its expansion policy—the Baltic States, a part of Finland, Bessarabia and the clearing of the Caucasus of its native inhabitants. Now that the war was ending in the defeat of Nazism the third phase was beginning. Our eyes were fully open to it but, alas, the statesmen of the West thought that they knew better. How sharply we still remember our pre-war warning to Beneš and the disservice to our cause with which he had rewarded us! And now in February, 1945, we read Winston Churchill's words in the House of Commons: 'Marshal Stalin and the Soviet Union have given us their solemn assurances that the sovereign independence of Poland will be preserved . . . The impression which I have formed from my journey to the Crimea and all my other opportunities for joint discussion is that Stalin and the other Soviet leaders desire to live in honourable friendship and equality with the Western democracies. I also consider that they are the masters of their own word. Never before has any Government fulfilled its obligations so well, even at its own loss, as the Soviet Russian Government.'

After this statement, reproduced prominently in the Soviet press, we felt that Stalin's home-grown apologists and boosters might as well retire from office. When Party members publicly said this sort of thing, it was deemed to be 'their patriotic loyalty to the Party of Lenin and Stalin'. It was only a handful of Stalin's immediate inner-Kremlin assistants who in fact went quite so far. The bitter irony of it was that while the West was buttering up Stalin in this way, Stalin was busy denigrating the West. I had good reason to know what was being prepared because in 1944 I had again been drawn into responsible, top-level work in the

Party. This was a heavy burden to add to my work of teaching and research. About this time I also published papers on such subjects as: Overloads acting on aircraft in undetermined curved trajectories of flight; The limits of cornering of high-speed aircraft; The applied theory of the mechanised wing; The three-wheeled chassis of the contemporary aircraft; Standards of stability and the aerodynamics of the high-speed aircraft; The mathematical theory of buffeting; Lectures on the dynamic stability of aircraft; A Course of Aerodynamics; An Atlas of Speed Profiles; The History of Rockets.

I had also published a number of books and articles and had nearly completed a book on the elementary theory of rocket propulsion. It may well be imagined that I had little time for frivolous political work, least of all for Party gerrymandering. All I did on hearing that I was in the running for the Secretaryship of the Academy Party Branch was to beg my colleagues not to vote for me. However, to the disgust of the commissars, the Branch elected me by about 85 per cent, and it reasserted its decision when, about two months later, owing to the commissars' distrust of me, it was asked to hold a re-election.

Despite the difficulty of combining this responsible political position with a time-table already full, there was of course some satisfaction to me in being chosen and in knowing that the Illarionovs were in fact a small minority. Actually it worked out well. The routine work was taken off me by faithful comrades, and much information became available to us; I learned where the country stood. Throughout 1944 and '45, until my service assignment to Berlin, I had first-hand evidence of the Kremlin's plans. There was really only one question constantly under examination: how best, in the final stage of the 'Soviet-German War', was the U.S.S.R. to further its aims beyond the 1941 frontiers?

One basic premise was that the British and Americans had hated us before the war and still hated us as much as ever now. Instructors and secret circulars harped on this one string. Examples of secret hostility were cited. The American strategic Air Force had a base at Poltava which maintained shuttle flights with Northern Italy: it was said that from this base American agents were feverishly working to undermine the Soviet Union by spreading espionage networks and anti-Soviet propaganda. Soviet missions in Britain and America were said to be subjected to espionage pressure.

It all sounded fantastic. We were eating American food, wearing British- and American-made uniforms, using Western war equipment, yet we were already directed to be hostile to our allies.

We were, of course, not surprised. *We* had never thought of Stalin as a loyal ally. No doubt many people in the West now realise that he was not, even when Churchill's and Roosevelt's men said he was. But how many of them, I wonder, even today fully admit to themselves what the Kremlin's war-time intentions were: namely, that, once the immediate danger to the U.S.S.R. was over, the Nazi enemy and the Western capitalist enemy (as it was conceived) should be made to bleed one another white. How different, for instance, the demand for the opening of a Second Front looks, when viewed from the Kremlin or from Western angles. There was the British angle, there was the American angle; Churchill at first wanted to strike through the Balkan Peninsula, entering through Yugoslavia, in which Tito's men were engaging upwards of thirty enemy divisions and had of themselves liberated two-thirds of Yugoslavia, but the Americans preferred the frontal attack from the 'Atlantic Wall'. Against these two views, which at first differed as to place, but never differed as to time, it seemed that the U.S.S.R. had one mind—that the Second Front should come as soon as possible, in order to relieve the pressure on the Soviet armies.

No, it was not nearly so simple. As the months passed, the Second Front was required increasingly in order to engage the British-American forces in what was considered an impossibly difficult and costly adventure. When the armies of Eisenhower and Montgomery moved swiftly forward, Army General Antonov, Chief of General Staff, was seen issuing from Stalin's presence as scarlet as a boiled beetroot, so roundly had the Boss cursed him for his inaccurate information on the strength of the Western allies' forces.

But it was not even so simple as that. So long as Churchill's proposal to strike through Yugoslavia had not been withdrawn, for all that Soviet propagandists called for a Second Front as early as possible, the Kremlin was stiff with anxiety lest it should come off, not because they in any way mistrusted the 'Royal' Government with which Churchill in 1943 proposed to enter Yugoslavia—indeed, the Kremlin was still parleying with young King Peter and his men, and would have decorated him as readily as Michael of Rumania, had he proved more compliant—but because the Kremlin was alarmed lest Western forces penetrated to the heart of Central Europe and became established there before Soviet forces reached the scene.

How well I remember Hitler's revenge weapons—the V-1 and V-2—not merely because the second was right in the centre of my own particular field of research, but by reason of the reaction of Party seniors. I found myself, for instance, discussing these

weapons with Colonel-Engineer Raisky, who worked in the Military Department of the Central Committee of the Party.

'Smart fellows, the Germans,' suddenly said Raisky. 'They've had a fine little toy stored up for the thick-skulled English.'

'The news pleases you, Comrade Raisky?'

'Does it then displease you, Comrade Tokaev?'

I remarked that rockets were a rather poor, blind weapon, which struck at the civilian population, and not only at military targets.

'No doubt,' said Raisky, 'but it won't do any harm to have one set of capitalists terrorise another.'

I remarked that one set happened to be our allies, the other, our enemies. Raisky said the British and Americans were a set of 'bloody brokers' and were only with us because it suited them. I noticed that we were both of us clad in British cloth, so I asked him exactly what advantage it was to Churchill to have fitted us out.

'I don't doubt, even that is bait for something,' said Raisky. 'I never have trusted Churchill. He is a great enemy of communism.'

'He has also been the friend of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.,' I said. 'He brought them help just when they most needed it.'

But Raisky stuck to his point: Churchill had been against us in the Civil War; he would wring our necks now if he only had the chance.

And then, to the Kremlin's consternation, the Second Front was successfully opened, and British-American motorised units penetrated Germany at tremendous speed. What fine plans they upset! The Kremlin was not concerned merely to occupy Germany. Stalin's predecessor, Alexander I, had seen his armies in Paris nearly a century and a half earlier. This time, once there, the 'Russian' armies would not be moved back so quickly. Detailed plans had been prepared. Card-indexes had been combed through and key men were already earmarked for special posts in occupied Europe. My own instructions, issued well in advance, were to study and master every detail of the Göttingen and Aachen districts, for here were to be found German aerodynamical institutes. Nikolchenko, a personal friend of mine, had specialised in Belgium; for him Brussels was the subject to study. Another friend, Strizhevsky, was preparing for work at Medon, near Paris. And so on. The Air Force command was busy drawing up plans for basing our squadrons not in Eastern Germany, but down the Rhine. The *Freies Deutschland* forces were organised to include not only

communists, but also non-communists, classified according to province of origin—men from the Saar, from the Ruhr, from Bavaria, and so on.

This Kremlin plan ended, as we know, in failure, in so far as Soviet forces failed to reach the Atlantic. But, at terrible cost in manpower—under orders to spare nothing in the race—they did reach a line drawn from Lübeck on the Baltic through Brandenburg and Dresden to Berlin. The cold war was already on, and Goebbels, scarcely dead, was laughing in his grave.

ASSIGNMENT TO BERLIN

I COME NOW to the final period of my Soviet life, from June 1945 until 1948, as jet propulsion authority of the Soviet Military Representation in Germany, where, till the breaking-point was forced on me, I served as Stalin's direct emissary on jet aerial propulsion.

The initiative was not mine. The ultimate decision was made either by Malenkov or, more probably, by Air Chief Marshal A. Novikov. About ten of us, senior officers, of whom only four were from the Zhukovsky Academy, were summoned to Personnel Administration H.Q. Marshal Vershinin, whom I met as I went in, gave me the startling news: I was to go to Berlin and put myself at the disposal of Marshal Zhukov. My heart leapt at the thought of being able to 'take a look at' the European world of which one had heard so much, but knew so little. Today, no doubt, my ill-wishers of the Malenkov camp imagine that I tricked them, that I already had in mind my 'defection' to the West. But nothing is further from the truth. If I had any personal grievance at that moment, it was because an earlier suggestion for my transfer to the Diplomatic School of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been turned down because of my non-Russian origin. But I certainly did not feel that at all keenly. Was I not fully absorbed in my research and teaching, and very near the top of the tree in my field? I had come through the war honourably, I had a magnificent team of students, and despite my utter disgust with the Kremlin policy at home and abroad, I think I can say I was a very happy man. Indeed, in the sphere of politics, was it not still easy to persuade oneself that, as the fires of war died down and people came to their senses again, the spirit of chauvinism would subside and at last we should make progress against Stalin?

No, I can say it without qualms, I was a loyal citizen as well as an enthusiastic scientist, and to leave my native land for another was very far indeed from my thoughts. My position I can sum up strictly in the following terms: I was going abroad, I would lay politics aside, in Berlin I would do nothing to diminish the external authority and dignity of my country. With all its faults, I was proud of it. How I was forced to change my mind

and whether I was right, the reader must judge for himself from the following pages.

Equipped with marching orders and papers, my next step was to break the news to General-Professor Kozlov, who held the Chair of Aircraft Construction. It was a difficult moment; I hated to leave him in the lurch before the ending of the academic year, and I was even more worried about my pupils who were on the eve of their annual examinations. But I found that Kozlov already knew. Indeed, he told me that some new post for me had been under consideration for the past three months. At first the plan had been that I should join the Aviation Department of the Central Committee of the Party. But here Malenkov and Zhdanov blackballed me. Then the suggestion arose that I should become the head of the Aerodynamical Laboratory attached to the Red Banner Scientific Research Institute of the Air Force, but the Academy argued that if I was to continue in this branch, I might as well stay where I was. At this point the State Defence Committee decided that one of the most urgent of tasks was to acquire the fruits of German aeronautical research, and then everybody agreed that I was the man for it.

Kozlov personally was grieved. He valued me as a Reader and had made what objection he could, but as a Party member he was obliged to subscribe to higher decisions. He admitted to me that I was just the man for the job, and: 'If you see an opening,' he said, 'get me out there too for a trip, and if you come across Prandtl, give him my humble respects.' Ludwig Prandtl, one of the founders of the science of aerodynamics, was then still alive; he died at Göttingen in 1952.

Kozlov and I knew each other well, and within reason I could be fairly frank with him, although he was in no way committed to an oppositionist policy but rather stood outside all politics. I asked him, as if lightheartedly, if he was serious about Germany. 'Of course I should like to get there,' he said, then added: 'I'd give my life to have a look. Honestly, I could do with a breath of fresh air.' Did he then imagine a Germany in ruins could offer him 'fresh air'? 'At least,' said Kozlov, 'it would be European air—or should I say, it would not be Soviet air.'

I eyed him quizzically. 'Surely you are not tired of Soviet air, Sergey Grigorievich?' I said.

'What about yourself, Grigori Alexandrovich?' he replied. 'Now, be honest!'

'Very well,' I said. 'I am tired of it.'

'And do you think I'm made of poorer stuff than yourself?'

In fact, I think every member of the staff envied us four 'foreigners', as we were at once dubbed, who were chosen for foreign service. There was Lt.-Colonel Gureyev, a Reader, off to America as member of a purchasing commission; Captain-Engineer Chizhov, in the Faculty of Aircraft Armament, then head of a special laboratory working in his field, and also going to America, I think, as an attaché; Senior Technician Lieutenant-Engineer Ovchinkin, a pupil of my own in aircraft radiotechnology; and myself. Ovchinkin was to be my personal assistant, as electronics is not my speciality. He was a young man, devoted to me, and he was head over heels with delight. He kept bursting into my room to make sure that his name still stood on the list.

There were two extremely moving leave-takings—one with my students at the Moscow Institute of Engineers of Geodesics, Aerophotography and Cartography, the other with my professorial comrades, assembled as a Party branch. Both the Deans of the Faculty in the Institute were very upset. They were great friends of mine, and wished me well, but my sudden appointment took them very sharply by surprise. They turned up at my last lecture. The auditorium was crammed. Clearly the news had already got round, for the students were all in their very best clothes. Let me not be misunderstood: the average British student on an ordinary day would turn up his nose at their smartest, but perhaps because of their poverty this display of Sunday best was all the more moving. It was with considerable emotion that I scanned this gathering, and suddenly realised what precious people I was leaving behind; at heart they were of gold, men and girls of great purity of spirit. I do not think I have ever seen or shall again see a crowd of young people of greater honesty or innate charm; they were very dear to me.

The last lecture was over. Shershen, a fellow Reader, took his place by my side and gloomily made the official announcement. 'Look around you, Comrades,' he said; 'you see the Su-2, an aeroplane of the first order, you see a mass of experimental equipment, you see lists of lectures which till recently were never heard here, you see that fat volume, *A Course of Aerodynamics*; you have all of you also been in the first-class laboratories of the Zhukovsky Academy and the Central Aerodynamical Institute. All this has been created by our beloved Grigori Alexandrovich, we owe it all to him and his abounding energy, but this is the last time he will lecture here, and this hall may never again see another like him. Allow me in your name as well as ours to offer him our thanks for all he has done for us.'

I record these words without false shame. In Moscow we are given to speaking from the heart on such occasions. Besides I was, and am, proud of this recognition of what had been a labour of love. And as Shershen spoke, my eyes rested on one after another of my pupils, and I saw that many eyes were moist, as mine were. Then student Spitzyn came up and added a short speech, and there was a roar of applause as he handed me a present from them all—a slim, hard object carefully wrapped in blue silk. Oh, why had they drained their slender purses to spend so much? It was a gold and alabaster cigarette-case of typical Russian work, and inside it my favourite *Kazbek* cigarettes and the message—written in Indian ink on fine paper—‘To dear Grigori Alexandrovich Tokaev as a token of gratitude from the Fifth Year Students of MIIGAiK’.¹

I was not only touched, I was even a little astonished. I had the reputation of being the most exacting teacher they had, a martinet who insisted on tidy notes, detested semi-literacy and said so, and many a time sent a slovenly student out to tidy up before he dared show his face to me again.

But the next speaker, a girl-student, Galya Lakhov, was speaking: ‘You have not only taught us your science, but also general culture, and for that we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.’ The thunder of applause at this was the best answer to any misgivings I had.

It will seem that I am now writing a lament at having had to part from Moscow. I have fascist-minded former compatriots, now also in exile, who will rub their hands and say they always knew I was really a communist. Nonsense! Professional anti-ists in the Western world, whether of Soviet or Western origin, make a practice—it is their trade—of painting all things Soviet as black. That of course is utter nonsense. We have never been entirely black. Let me state most positively here that the U.S.S.R. has a scientific and technological intelligentsia of which any country in the world would be proud. We were highly conscious of our great, broad, cultural tradition. Names like Tolstoy, Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Shevchenko, Chekhov, Nekrassov, Lermontov and Kuprin spring to one’s mind in letters, and in science and mathematics, Zhukovsky, Lomonossov, Chaplygin, Lobachevsky, Euler, Lyapunov, Leibenzon, Golubyov, Kolmogorov, Mushelishvili, Christianovich, Tupoliev, and Vavilov. It was my good fortune—not my misfortune—to have studied and worked among such

¹ MIIGAiK: initials of Moscow Institute of Engineers of Geodesics.

—Translator.

giants. I am very, very proud that my work as a scientist was an organic part of their work. In this respect I can, without fear of contradiction, say that my life has been enviable in its proud riches. The political dictatorship was a savage hindrance, but even this was never able to prevent a hard core of us from forming a warm, compact fraternity of science and culture. The friendship we knew through our intellectual work together was the finest and strongest bond it was possible to have. I think this showed through at the assembly of our Party branch which was called specially to take leave of me, a branch consisting of men of science only, to the vast majority of whom the Party card had long been merely a tiresome necessity of practical life. The opening speech was by my deputy, Lt.-Colonel Engineer Voskoboyev. We were old friends. We had studied together, worked together, been in like fashion dragged before Party courts and had damaging 'tails' pinned to our *dossiers*. He informed the company officially of my new appointment and equally formally suggested they should appraise my work as leading Party officer. Such was the custom, and I sat and heard professors, readers, engineers, one after another speak warmly of all that I had done—for all knew with what combination of stubbornness and adroitness I had contrived to protect them from commissar follies—for it is often possible for the pugnacious to be adroit when it comes to manœuvring others among the many reefs which beset our lives. Many were the tiresome, time-wasting assemblies from which I had saved them. The conclusion was a warm resolution in my favour, and this, again according to the rules, took its place in my *dossier*.

The official proceedings over, we sat on in informal confabulation. Now was the time for personal wishes—and requests—for one, a good fountain-pen from Germany; for another, a typewriter; for a third, some work on aerodynamics; for a fourth, a good slide rule; for every *Nachalnik* of a laboratory, lists of essential equipment. This does not mean that the U.S.S.R. did not produce these articles. But between production and supply there can often be a very large gap. We had not yet recovered from the war—and the stringencies of pre-war years, when five-year plans swallowed all resources.

Few people in the West can imagine what beggars Soviet scientists have been. We had provided Stalin with tens of thousands of first-class aircraft and tanks, cannon and mortars, but he never found the means to furnish us with those many little things which elsewhere, so I was soon to learn, every little man and not only leading scientists, considered indispensable. Automatic pistols and marvellous parade uniforms were official issue, but not fountain-pens.

Most remarkable of all was the Kremlin's recent apathy in regard to writing-paper. In this respect the war years were an age of plenty, because with their equipment the British and Americans sent us ton-loads of instructions, printed on one side only, and on the reverse of these sheets we planned our Katiushas and advanced aircraft.

A brief week-end in the country, where I met Comrades X and Pegovsky and had valuable discussions, and I was off, carefully briefed beforehand by a charming but quite inadequate Lt.-General of Aviation, Kutsevalov, Hero of the Soviet Union. He was to be the leader of the team, and had been made Assistant to the GOC on Aviation matters and Head of the Air Force Department of the Soviet Military Administration. It was laughable. I believe his education had been limited to the flying school. Certainly he knew no foreign languages. He had no administrative experience whatever. To add to this, he was of a jittery temperament. But the Kremlin thought him just the right man to keep fifteen other officers of high rank and other, still higher, qualifications on the straight path. He had one short word for all foreigners, *mraz*.¹ He defined our tasks in Germany with brilliant simplicity: we had defeated the Germans, now it was our job to kick them hard while they were down, and knock the capitalist stuffing out of them. He told us that the main directive of the Central Committee of the Party and the Government was to keep Germany under occupation for just so long as would prove necessary to introduce the Soviet system. Further, he outlined the directives arising from the Yalta Conference—disarmament, demilitarisation, denazification, export of economic potential, labour power and so forth—repeating all the time the official Government formula: industrially and agriculturally, Germany must be set back 50–60 years, otherwise we should be threatened again.

Our departure in itself was a gesture. As the Red Army had advanced into Germany, the railway tracks had been altered to the broad-gauge Soviet system. We travelled in the first direct Moscow-Berlin express. It was on show for days beforehand at the Belorussian Terminus in Moscow. It was a perfect show train: what stewardesses, what cleanliness, what service! Our first stop in Poland was at the Warsaw suburb of Praga. The shell-pocked walls were gay with flags. It might have been a Soviet country town. There was an hour's stop, and I got down, together with a companion. The station exit was guarded by two men in uniforms

¹ *Mraz*: more venomous than the English term *dago*, but of the same order.

—Translator.

curiously like those of the Soviet police, and they asked us for our passes. They spoke perfect Russian. When questioned, they said yes, they were Russians, then: 'No, Comrade Lt.-Colonel, that is to say, Poles.' 'Well, which is it? Make up your mind, man!' 'Well, as far as it goes, I am a Russian, but just now, sir, I am a citizen of the Polish Democratic Republic . . .'

After all, Boleslaw Berut, Prime Minister, was a Soviet citizen. So was the Polish Minister of War, Rokossovski. Minc, economic dictator of Poland, was an official transferred from the Kremlin.

'Well, do you believe in the future independence of Poland?' my companion, Colonel Chernikov, asked me. 'You know what the Yalta decisions promised.'

Not another word was said as we slowly made our way back to our train, for we had no special passes, and our mock-Polish police could not let us leave the platform.

But if the impression Warsaw made on us was rather Russian, this was nothing to what we found in Eastern Germany. There was a typical Soviet atmosphere everywhere, with brass bands, choral gatherings and speeches at every station. At Frankfurt-on-Oder the triumphal reception was of a special magnificence. Frankfurt was a Red Army base. The station was swarming with Soviet women-folk—army personnel and civilians too, no doubt *Ost-arbeiter* and 'Patriotic Soviet women'—that is to say, Soviet D.P.'s on their way home.

I was accosted by a charming lieutenant of the medical corps, Polina Shchukin, who was going to Berlin. She pressed a lovely bunch of flowers into my hands and I embraced her; but at my peck on her cheek her eyelids fluttered so demurely that I tried again, with better aim and purpose. 'No, no, you shouldn't,' said she. 'Shouldn't?' cried I. 'Isn't it on the instructions?' We both laughed. 'After all,' I said, 'I know how these things are organised,' and kissed her again; but this time, I will be honest, it was a brotherly kiss. She had understood me, and I welcomed a frank comrade. Besides, I was in a genuinely festive mood. After all, we were celebrating the end of the war. We boarded the famous express and sat down to talk. Colonel-Engineer Silin came by, camera in hand, and I asked him to take a snap of us, 'with the flowers in the background', I laughed. But to our amazement, Polina cried out in protest: 'No, no, never those flowers,' and in an instant she had taken them and flung them scornfully out of the window. Her eyes flashed and her colour mounted, as she explained that the Political Section of the Frankfurt Soviet Army Command had recruited German women and marched them out into the

meadows to pick flowers and make them up into bouquets. Among these women were many who had just lost husband, children, home, and they wept as they picked and tied the bundles.

'So you greeted me with the tears of German women?' I asked Polina softly.

'I obeyed orders,' Polina said, and Silin nodded understandingly. For some moments I could find nothing to say. The wooden stupidity of those orders already filled me with uneasy forebodings. At the same time, my heart warmed to Polina. How easily she could have silenced her conscience and avoided revealing to two officers what she really felt! Or could she? Perhaps not. The most brutal of all modern wars was powerless to rob the women of our country of their delightful directness of reaction to fundamental things. It was with pride that I had Silin take a photograph of us together—without the flowers.

Our journey ended at the Silesian *Bahnhof* in Berlin. It was a material world completely new to my eyes. My first impression was of a cemetery packed with people and with Soviet slogans, uniforms, portraits of the Kremlin leaders; in the centre of it was an enormous brass band, and monster banners with greetings. Speeches, of course. And then official cars transported us to our H.Q. at Karlshorst.

Warsaw, Minsk, Rzhev, Rostov and Stalingrad—I had seen all these ruins, but this chaos of debris left me dumb. I would give much never to have seen it; then I could have gone on thinking comfortably that however bad were the effects of war, they were, after all, limited. Berlin opened a wound in my heart which will never heal. The sight of the indiscriminate, inchoate annihilation of so much patient, ordered human effort, appalled me. The conditions to which the conquerors were submitting the survivors made one thing clear beyond question: there can be no monster more loathsome, more criminal, than the man who is willing to consider total warfare as a method of deciding differences. This is something on which all decent men must turn their backs for ever.

My reactions were all the more painful since, if the indiscriminate material destruction was the work of our Western allies, the mass humiliation of the Germans was mainly the work of the Soviet soldiery. The excesses to which the womenfolk of the destroyed Caucasian peoples were submitted was the work of professional NKVD terrorists, but here it was the officers and men of ordinary Soviet regiments who were responsible. I cannot write my own story without writing of this; we are the products of our experiences, and an experience so terrible as this cannot be left out. It

must not be taken for anti-Russian feeling—the men responsible were not even exclusively Russians, they were men of the Soviet armies.

I knew in advance that something of this sort had taken place. One said: 'Men get out of hand.' It is one thing to hear about excesses, quite another thing to *know them*. For a few days after my arrival I had nothing to do. I used the time for sight-seeing. I saw too much. Almost the first day I came across this incident: I had turned down a side street in Karlshorst, not far from the Köpenicker Allee. I caught the familiar sound of an accordion, then I saw a group of soldiers bawling a particularly lewd front-line ditty. Suddenly, cutting across the music and the singing, came desperate screams. I ran to the house from which they came. Through the first window I saw nothing. Through the next window I saw two young girls, stark naked, being misused by hulking fellows of *my* army in a bestial way which I will not describe. This was what the White Guards had done in the Caucasus when I was a child, in the Civil War; the Soviet Forces could not do this. At pistol point I drove the men into the next room and disarmed them. But at the army control point to which I marched them under arrest they were released, and the young captain in charge warned me not to put my nose too often where it was not wanted. As he said: *Pobeditelei ne sudiati* ('Victors are not judged'). Licence had become a standardised principle.

This had been going on ever since our troops entered Berlin. It continued for a long time. I discussed it with Marshal Zhukov, with Marshal Sokolovsky, with the head of Soviet propaganda, Tiulpanov. I brought it up when I was called before the Politbureau on other business. On the whole, though not entirely, I found people agreeing with me that these indecencies sullied our victories. But nothing was done to put a stop to the excesses. They were the logical development of the slogan *Tovarishch, ubei nemtza!* ('Comrade, kill your German!') launched earlier by Ilya Ehrenburg. Nobody could be more conscious of this than the Kremlin bosses, who throughout their careers had based their leadership on crisply formulated slogans. The slogan was not just an author's outburst of indignation, it was an officially inspired and backed policy, to be followed strictly down through the hierarchy of command. It was a general licence, for which Ehrenburg was not punished. Nothing was done against it, even when those ultimately responsible had been brought to realise to what hideous lengths it led.

With victory, the Army did not become an army of occupation, but a horde of rapers and pillagers. What the men could not take

away, they destroyed. Mirrors, refrigerators, washing-machines, radio sets, bookcases—anything not easily portable was riddled with bullets. No woman was safe from rape; young girls would be violated in front of parents. Everything was done under threat of death, and experience soon taught the Germans that the ‘Russians’ held life cheap. A party of men would march in, wherever in the first terrible days women were hiding, and portion the victims out: ‘You take that one, that’s for you. This is my piece of goods.’ Articles of clothing were stolen. Men or women were liable to be stripped naked in the street. The repressions and shortages of many years of victorious State socialism were finding relief. Wrist-watches held a surprising fascination; I have seen a Red Army man brandishing as many as half-a-dozen at once on his wrist. The stock phrases of the Soviet men were: *Uri, uri, Tsap-tzarap*, and *Frau, komm’ schlafen*.¹ At the first, Berliners rapidly handed over their watches; the second indicated a general demand on whatever the German possessed; the third was a command to a woman to follow the Soviet conqueror and be his sport. It is not surprising if by the time I arrived I found it impossible even to ask the way of a German, for I was shunned as if I carried the plague. Children fled shrieking into the ruins at the sight of us. How humiliating to be feared in this way, and for such a reason!

Even when I had been made Special Air Force Plenipotentiary of the Staff of the Soviet Military Administration, I had too much time to look round and see things. Truman, Churchill (then, later, Attlee) and Stalin were in council at Potsdam, but scientific matters were not touched on. I was allotted a fine two-storey house, number 25 in Potsdam’s Jügerstrasse. Who had previously lived there I did not know. By Soviet standards there was room for up to fifteen families, but I had it all to myself. As Major-General Fedotov, Commandant of Potsdam at the time, graciously said: ‘Make the most of it, old chap, while the going’s good, and if you’d like to know what heaven on earth is!’

The experience my stay in that house brought me will be the most revealing balance sheet of my enjoyment. Driving home one evening in the luxurious car which had been placed at my disposal, I noticed a chink of light in the basement. So I went down and knocked on the door. No answer. Repeated knocks and shouting, first in Russian, then in German, remained unanswered, then my straining ears caught the whispering, in German, of a woman and

¹ *Uri*: The German word *Uhr*—watch, with a Russian plural ending.

Tsap-tzarap: a colloquial phrase based on a Russian root—*snip-snap*!

Frau komm’ schlafen: broken German; woman, come and sleep.

some children. At last, the door opened and I saw a German woman with a small boy and girl at her back. Was there a man in the flat? I asked. Somebody hiding from the Occupation Authorities? Their eyes told me that there was. I should now have been more on my guard than before, but instead I replaced my pistol in its case and entered the room. I could see they were terrified. 'Herr Offizier, please don't kill us,' the woman pleaded. 'Herr Offizier, please don't shoot our Mummy,' came from the children. 'Now, really, why do you think I might kill you?' I asked.

'You are the victors,' she said . . .

An inner door opened, and a German of about my own age entered, his right arm in a sling. His clothes hung loose on him. He asked my permission to be present.

'Is this your apartment?' I asked.

'No, but these are my wife and children.'

Then why seek my permission? Had he not a natural right to be with his family? I could see his utter astonishment. '*Fantastisch!*' he cried, perhaps not quite realising what he was saying. '*Fantastisch . . .*' How could one of the conquering race speak thus? I gave him two reasons. All Russian conquerors were not barbarians, and in any case, I was not a Russian, but a Caucasian. He had read much, he said, about the Caucasus; how amazing that he should now see 'a Russian Caucasian'. 'But I am not a "Russian Caucasian",' I said, 'simply a Caucasian.'

His name was Küchermann. He was a doctor of biological sciences. He had fought against us. '*Ich bin schuldig*,' he said, 'I am guilty.' He had been a member of the Nazi Party, and he repeated: '*Ich bin schuldig*.' He expected death. Perhaps he thought he deserved it. But he wanted to save his wife and children. The little girl was ten, my own daughter, seven; the boy was younger; both these children were starving, like their parents. What was our victory worth to humanity, if it sowed such fear in the defeated? I explained, as calmly as I could, that I had not come downstairs to kill, but to find out who was there. I led the children, one by each hand, upstairs and fed them. It was a happy moment. What crime had they committed? In our lives I think we all have moments which stand out and are never forgotten: this is one of mine.

From that moment the mother and the two children moved about freely. They at least had no need for concealment. And *Parteigenossen* Küchermann? There are junctures when in my opinion a decision must be taken as between one human being and another, not as between artificial social categories to which either

may belong. This was one. It was not the case of a Soviet officer handling a National Socialist Party member, but of one man, placed in the dominant position, and another, who was utterly defeated. I allowed him to live on in the basement as long as I occupied the house; in short, I concealed him. Was it wrong? I do not think so. I am sure that my revolutionary democrat comrades would have agreed. To have handed this man over to the authorities—to imprisonment (for concealing himself), deportation and probable death—would not have advanced the cause of humanity one millimetre.

Two details are worth recording.

A day or two after my discovery, the drain of four extra mouths began to make itself felt; so I went straight to General Fedotov and asked for an additional fortnight's supply. Of course he asked why. I told him.

'Children? Soviet émigrés?'

'No.'

'Vlasovists?'

'No, Comrade General.'

'Not Germans?'

'Yes, Germans.'

Fedotov drummed his fingers on his desk as he thought that over. We got on well together. 'You know, of course, that it is not for us to feed the Germans.' I said both he and I had children. Now I had two German children on my conscience. 'The U.S.S.R. won't be a bit the worse off if I feed two little Germans, but I shall have a tremendous load off my mind,' I said. 'I shall die with a clear conscience.' Without another word, this typical 'Russian' and good Soviet patriot took up his pen and wrote out a special order.

The other point of interest is the reaction of the German couple. After some weeks, we naturally knew each other very well. One day the woman asked me why I had been so kind to them; the fact that the children had been starving did not satisfy her as an answer. 'It is so unlike a Russian!'

The words were far more crushing to me than she could realise. I reasoned with her now as I had reasoned with her on the first day. But it had no effect, still she mistrusted me. 'I am grateful, of course,' she said, 'and I would like to trust you. But—I cannot.' I pressed her for an explanation. At last she gave it to me: 'A woman should not lie,' she said. 'The Russians have destroyed my ability to believe anything they say or do.' She had been one of the victims of the first days of defeat; I think there were few

girls, women or even very old women who were not. 'I can never forget that a Russian officer stripped me naked in front of the children and forced me to lie with him. I wish I could forget it.' How deep, one wonders, is the mistrust which Stalin's days of imperial triumph have created in the German lands?

Her husband too mistrusted me. But his was a male mistrust, its causes were different. He was altogether a different sort of person. Out of regard for his safety he persuaded me to call him, not Kücherman but Adamiak. He was an intelligent man but deeply committed to National Socialism. One day he asked me if 'we Russians' trusted the British and Americans. Of course, I told him, one had to trust those who fought at one's side. If he was grateful to me for helping his wife and children, should we not be grateful to our allies for their aid? I was sufficiently interested in his answer to note it down immediately after the conversation I had with him.

'I have been a convinced National Socialist and I am one still,' he said. 'All the same I think our Führer made one unforgivable mistake. He should have come to an understanding with your Führer, Stalin, so that together we could have fought the British and Americans—but particularly the British. So long as the British hold the keys to Europe there will be no peace or tranquillity either for the Germans or the Russians. But if only we could smash them once and for all, there would no longer be any conflict between us. Hitler would never see this. That was his cardinal error. That is why I cannot believe in the present friendship between the British and the Russians.'

I assured him that I held the British in great esteem, and that for my part I was doing everything I could to make the alliance stronger.

'That could only be at Germany's expense,' he said, 'and if there is no strong Germany, sooner or later they will attack Russia.' He was unshakable by argument. I saw before me, *mutatis mutandis*, as great a fanatic as I had been in my early days, but he was older and had read more widely than I had then. In his heart he was as fanatical a Nazi as when Hitler had seemed to be on the point of ruling the world; he believed fervently that the world could only be saved by a united Russo-German front against the Western 'plutocrats'.

I must confess that I had not at first realised that I was hiding so ardent an enemy of everything I believed in, and after this talk I was prompted to act on the general letter of my instructions and denounce him. My own impulse was indeed to do this, but yet

again I told myself—the actual fighting was over and to denounce him now for his ideas would serve nothing but revenge; and revenge, surely, was a weapon only for the weak and the unprincipled.

The issue was soon decided for me. The Potsdam Conference drew to its close and I received orders to move to the Headquarters of the Soviet Military Administration. When the Adamiaks learned the news they were in despair: for them it meant the end. The children came to me—I don't know if it was on their own impulse or if the parents had sent them; they pleaded with me: '*Hilfen Sie uns.*'

I still think I had no option. My car pass was one of Series A., which allowed me to drive through any of the barriers without having my papers examined. (This of course was before the battle for Berlin began.) I drove Adamiak to Western Germany, and a few days later I took his wife and children to join him.

'What would happen to you if you were found out?' Frau Ingrid asked.

'I should probably be shot.'

Again, with German persistence, she asked me for the reason why I did it, and again, without a trace of success, I tried to get her to understand how we interpreted the great Rousseau's watchword: *Man, be thyself!* But I think Rousseau's words meant nothing to her. Will they some day mean something to her children?

A DIPLOMATIC INTERLUDE

THE WEEKS immediately following the Potsdam Conference were perhaps the most extraordinary period in my career. The official reason for my arrival in Germany was my knowledge and experience of aeronautics: I was to study German achievements in this field, get in touch with German experts and try to induce them to co-operate with Soviet scientists, and I was to lecture to the 16th Soviet Air Force which was then stationed in Germany. Overnight, however, I was turned into an administrator and diplomatist. The one advantage of my new position was that it enabled me to make closer acquaintance with our Allies, and also to observe our own behind-the-scenes attitude towards them.

The manner of my appointment was characteristic. One night a despatch rider on a motor bicycle brought me an urgent summons from Colonel-General Kurasov, Chief of Staff of Soviet Military Administration (he later became GOC in Austria and is, at the moment of writing, Deputy Chief of Staff with the rank of General). When I reported I found Major Kudriavtsev who had also been summoned. We went in. Kurasov was with Sokolovsky, the present Soviet Chief of Staff. They told us that in accordance with the Potsdam decision, a Soviet section of the Control Commission was immediately to be set up. Comrade Molotov's instructions were that we should prepare a scheme for the organisation of the Section and, until the arrival of specially appointed officials from Moscow, to act as Soviet representatives on the Commission. Kudriavtsev was to keep the protocol and deal with the financial side.

Kudriavtsev accepted his orders without a murmur and left, but I felt very morose: what had any of this to do with my profession, I protested. Sokolovsky pulled me up sharply. Did I think that *he* wanted to waste time in talking with the British and Americans? He was a field commander! But he obeyed the Party's orders and so should I; indeed, I should be proud of the confidence which the Party and the Government placed in me, it was a great honour.

Did I know, Kurasov broke in smiling, who my British opposite number was? It was a certain Duncan, no more a diplomatist than myself, but a university lecturer on aeronautics. The British gave

him out to be one Greysbrook, but we knew who he was. What did that suggest the British were up to? He implied that there would be competition in the Control Commission to harness German applied science.

As it turned out, Kurasov was wrong. Duncan had been sent merely to study and 'organise' the German aerodynamic institutes of Göttingen and Braunschweig.

I accepted my orders grimly. My new office was in the historic, detached two-storey house at Karlshorst where on May 9th, 1945, the German Capitulation Declaration had been signed. This house had become our *Berlin Kremlin*. It was constantly under heavy armed guard and even officers commanding units of the Soviet Army had no right of entry. Direct telephones linked it with the military governors of the provinces and with the Kremlin. The lower storey was occupied by Marshals Zhukov and Sokolovsky (GOC and deputy GOC); the upper storey housed Zhukov's secretariat, Kudriavtsev and myself. Here began for me an inner-Kremlin life and my eyes were opened to many things which are not within the scope of this book and which I had not dreamt of before. Through my hands flowed top secret telegrams, orders, instructions and directives from the General Staff and from the Kremlin; we, on our side, initiated a number of secret reports. We were the brain and nerve centre of SVAG.

SVAG stands for 'Soviet Military Administration of Germany', an apparatus of immense complexity and with an enormous staff, dominated by the NKVD and NKGB.¹ Fashioned on the intricate pattern of the Moscow Kremlin, it consisted of the headquarters surrounded by a number of executive bodies; the Military Administration headed by Kurasov was a sort of Cabinet; under it were Departments of Army, Navy, Air Force, Economic matters, Trade, Political matters, Law, Transport and Communications, Propaganda, Supplies, Personnel, Repatriation, etc., and under these a ramification of other departments, sections and groups. In addition, every province of occupied territory had its own Soviet Military Administration, and this too was under Kurasov's staff. After some experience abroad I feel confident in saying that our SVAG was the most involved and centralised piece of bureaucratic machinery in the world. An officer, however high his rank, travelling back to Moscow on business, had to spend at least a week collecting the necessary travel papers—all this, be it noted, merely to travel within his own Soviet-controlled territory.

¹ *Norodny Comissariat Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*, The Soviet MI5 and MI6.

The people, however, who worked in this vast soulless machine were ordinary human beings whose personal foibles and whims cut right across political and international differences and considerations.

Our relations with our Allies were on various levels. There was, for instance, the level of official banquets. Each country in turn provided the chairman of the Control Commission and acted as host at the current entertainments. One day the French representative, Le Boucher, asked me why it was that 'we Russians' entertained so lavishly—did we have an ulterior purpose? We did in fact produce a greater profusion of caviars and sturgeons and miraculously cooked game than anybody else, and to wash it down, rivers of fine wines and vodka. We knew that the others liked it, and we were not above liking it ourselves: most Soviet people are expansive, and ancient customs of hospitality have survived Stalinism. By way of reply, however, I asked Le Boucher why the French gave banquets. 'That's quite simple,' he said with a Frenchman's readiness to give an orderly answer. 'First, because everybody does it, and secondly because, after working, everybody likes to eat and drink well.' 'Ah, but the U.S.S.R. entertains you to demonstrate its socialist plenty,' I said. We both laughed cheerfully, neither of us the wiser.

One day, just as General Eisenhower and the American Ambassador, Mr. Murphy, were coming up the marble stairs, one of our girl secretaries fluttered up to me and dragged me aside. 'Grigori Alexandrovich,' she implored me breathlessly, 'you simply must help us. We have made up our minds to be photographed with Eisenhower and Montgomery. It's very, very important . . . It's up to you—if you don't help us, we'll make our own plans, and if that upsets your arrangements for the banquet, it's you who'll get into hot water, not we.'

Of course I knew why it was so important—every girl wanted to send home a photograph which showed that she had actually been within talking distance of the two great generals who were universally admired. I asked if any other General would do, but she was most indignant—nobody liked Clay, nor would General Koeltz do, they wanted Eisenhower, universally liked by the peoples of the U.S.S.R. right up to Zhukov himself, and they wanted Montgomery. 'His own people call him "Monty" he is so simple and natural.'

The plan was drawn up. At a given signal the girls were to walk across the banquetting hall; then, at a certain point, one of them would drop something, creating a diversion; the two great men

were sure to turn their heads in their direction and at that moment the photographer would act. Alas, the commissars do not like individual initiative. Among the secretaries was an NKGB agent, and before anything could be done, Colonel Shibailov, the officer in charge of contacts with foreigners, came running up to me with a peremptory demand to 'stop your idiotic play-acting with capitalist generals'. The girls were in tears when I told them; it was a great disappointment.

Only once did I hear Marshal Zhukov speak disparagingly of Eisenhower. Apparently on Clay's instructions, the Americans had begun to infringe certain regulations governing flights to and from Berlin. Zhukov, in a fury, cursed Clay and then added that Eisenhower was only a 'pet dog of American business men'. In general, however, his attitude is illustrated by the personal care he took over the arrangements when Eisenhower came to receive a Soviet decoration.

As soon as the date for the reception was fixed we all went into special training. Zhukov noticed this. 'Who is all that for?' he asked his ADC, and when he was told that it was for Eisenhower, he ordered 'all this spit and polish nonsense' to be stopped at once. 'Can't you see, Eisenhower isn't one of your starched collar diplomatists? He's a front-line general—all these artificial preparations are an insult to him.'

As a result, on the appointed day there was only a very small guard of honour in the courtyard being trained by a lieutenant. We were watching them out of a window. So was Zhukov. Suddenly, with a juicy oath, there he was outside. Taking the lieutenant's sabre, he ordered him to join the ranks, and put them through their paces himself. (And how the soldiers loved it, with Zhukov, thrice Hero of the Soviet Union, shouting the orders!) Then Zhukov ordered the lieutenant to take over while he himself stood in the ranks. Afterwards he lectured them all. 'The man you're going to receive,' he said, 'isn't a society miss, but a field general, so you've got to greet him like men in the field, naturally, unassumingly. And don't forget that General Eisenhower is my personal friend.'

I think he meant it. I remember an occasion at the end of August, 1945, during the fourth sitting of the Control Commission when Eisenhower left at the end of the proceedings, looking very grim. The subjects on the agenda had been the provision of the British with an aerodrome in Berlin and the question of former German soldiers being stopped from wearing uniforms; our impression was that Eisenhower had been in disagreement with Washington.

Zhukov, in good humour, turned to joke with the girl translators. One of them took advantage of the Marshal's smiles to ask him whether Eisenhower was married. 'Oh yes,' he replied. 'He has a darling of a wife, and very attractive too. And what do you think they call her?—Moomie!'

'Moomie? What a frightful thing!' (Both of them pronounced 'Mummy' in the Russian fashion and confused it with the Russian word meaning an embalmed body.)

'And what sort of a man is he, really?' another girl asked. 'Is he pleasant to talk to?'

'Pleasant? I've never met an American like him before,' said Zhukov. 'They are usually all cast in the same mould. Their minds never rise far above money matters and business; they're lost wherever there are political subtleties . . . But that cannot be said of Eisenhower. He is altogether a very pleasant personality, and most amusing off the record. Now, General Clay's another matter altogether. I should say he's the craftiest and most malicious American in the whole of Berlin.'

In general, Eisenhower was regarded by us as a fine character, a brilliant commander-in-chief and a courteous ally—though tough in defence of *any* political principle (I underline 'any' because we doubted if in fact he had any particular political principles of his own); while Clay on the other hand was thought to be an implacable enemy of the U.S.S.R. and communism, the most powerful American in Germany, a man not to be trifled with but certainly to be feared.

Montgomery we admired as a brilliant general. Unofficially he was a wonderful conversationalist, but in official talks he was inclined to curtness and acerbity. He avoided questions which were awkward for Great Britain and, if his toes were trodden on, would switch instantly from diplomatic courtesy to military inflexibility.

Of the other Western representatives, we considered Koenig as a gentleman of great courtesy who did not trust a single one of the Allies, a man who inwardly hated the U.S.S.R. and with whom it was dangerous to discuss anything except in the presence of a witness or a tape recorder; Koeltz, as wise, crafty, understanding, reasonable, and the most outstanding Frenchman in Berlin; and Robertson, as an equally clever general and diplomatist, capable of getting what he wanted quietly where others got nowhere by shouting, altogether a man who had better be dealt with by trained diplomats rather than by Soviet generals.

And how did we estimate our three Allies? Inside SVAG we believed the Americans to be poor politicians but agile business men,

the French to be so much dead wood—people who talked in circles and only hindered any energetic application of Allied control, the British we regarded as born diplomats, foxy politicians and brilliant at espionage. A cartoon which was passed from hand to hand showed four motor cars leaving Berlin: one was a simple Soviet Army lorry with two superstructures piled high with German radio sets, baths, clocks, cows, pigs, mattresses, pianos and what not; another was a U.S. Studebaker lorry twice as high, filled to overflowing with souvenirs—from ladies' jewellery to bits of masonry from the ruins of Berlin; the third was a roomy limousine in which was a half-naked girl lying in the arms of a well-dressed Frenchman; the fourth was an armoured British truck—inside it sat a single British gentleman with a thin, expressionless face, dressed in civilian clothes, with his brief-case bulging with German, French, Soviet and American top-secret documents. Perhaps there was a grain of truth in it. Certainly we were more cautious with the British than with any of the others. If a junior Soviet officer was reported to be privately consorting with an American, he would be merely reprimanded, but if, in identical circumstances, he was seen with an Englishman, he would be sent home. One result of this belief in a 'perfidious Albion' was that if the Americans wanted an aerodrome in Berlin, it was taken at its face value as a military necessity; but if the British made the same request, there was an immediate feverish search for their occult motives.

To describe in any detail the impact on us of our meetings with our Allies would take a whole book. Our whole approach was profoundly different from theirs. That was why we could not understand them and were constantly on the alert for trickery. A good example of this was our reaction to the way the Allies tackled the partition of Germany. We were accustomed to believe that we must win every square inch of territory by incessant struggle and hard bargaining, and we were inclined to judge of situations not in terms of judicial concepts but in those of naked power. When, at the outset, the Allies demanded a share of Berlin as a symbol of their part in the occupation of Germany, we regarded it as a legal quibble to be conceded at the moment, but which could easily be dealt with afterwards. Naturally, however, we demanded, in exchange for withdrawing Soviet troops from the Western sectors of Berlin, the cession to us by the Allies of certain other parts of German territory: but we were utterly at a loss when the Western representatives (for practical reasons which were obvious to them but not at all to us) proposed the present demarcation line, a partition far more favourable to us than any we had dreamt of demanding. Were

they bereft of their reason? That was hardly likely. Then what was the dastardly trickery concealed behind their gesture? Why on earth should they, without so much as a word of argument—let alone a show of tanks and bomber squadrons—hand us nearly the whole of Thuringen, then held by the Americans, and an enormous slice of the country occupied by British troops? Nor was the official Soviet world in the least grateful for their generosity.

Even when later Soviet pressure was in fact answered by Allied counter-pressure—as when the Americans ranged their tanks demonstratively along the *Avus* autostrada—the attitude on the two sides of the dividing line was not at all identical. Taught to conceive of life in terms of active struggle, our men were always moved by an undercurrent of hostility which was certainly lacking in our individual opposite numbers.

Naturally enough, our attitude completely ruled out in official situations the kind of humour on which the British thrive, and which to us was not even conceivable. On one occasion the Commission was discussing what were then known as ‘the military formations in the British Zone’. The Soviet view was that they ought to be immediately disbanded; the British disagreed. Suddenly, in a characteristically English effort to relieve the tension, Montgomery leaned forward, his eyes bright and his long nose wagging, and said to Zhukov: ‘I hope you’re not proposing to make war on me?’

Montgomery can never have imagined the repercussions of that joke. The official Soviet world was shaken to its core. It retired into fevered consultations; Zhukov even rang up Moscow and discussed the matter with Stalin and the General Staff; a verbatim report of the proceedings was flown out to Moscow by a special plane; SVAG and Moscow throbbed for days with the debate—what could the British general have meant and what were the intentions of the British Government concealed in his remark?

One curious thing is that the British are convinced that they enjoy ‘Russian humour’, and the ‘Russians’ are equally convinced that they enjoy English jokes. Nevertheless, like Kipling’s East and West, the two never seem to meet.

In general, the British attitude to things seemed to us unnaturally—or suspiciously—relaxed.

One pitch-black and rainy night I was driving back from Western Thuringen. Near Magdeburg, beside the autostrada, there was a British petrol-filling station. As I reached this point the rain poured down in torrents, visibility was nil, and I decided to stop for a short rest at this British outpost. I drove in. Of course, certain

security precautions were observed—they had had no warning of the coming of a Soviet officer—but within a few moments I was taken to a hut and offered a hot cup of tea. An officer who knew some German spoke to me. I am sure his reasons were not official when he asked me what had made me turn out on a night like this.

‘Orders.’

‘Orders?’ He was puzzled. ‘But there’s always tomorrow.’

‘Not for us,’ I replied. ‘Our commanding officers believe in working the clock round.’

With characteristic English tolerance he said: ‘Well, you know your own business. But the war *is* over, you know. What’s the hurry?’

I told him I envied the British their calm ways. He answered: ‘I’m very fond of the Russians. Very hard-working chaps. All the same, a man does need a bit of rest.’

Certainly that night the joke was against me. At about midnight I continued on my way, only to be stopped half-an-hour later at a Red Army control post. There were several men waving their lanterns and brandishing their pistols. They demanded my papers. I pointed to the special pass on my windscreen. ‘Your personal papers!’ one of them shouted, and I found myself staring into the muzzle of a gun. I handed him my papers. Without reading them, he ordered me to drive my car off the road. Then another man went round the car to let the air out of the tyres: ‘To prevent you getting away,’ he explained, ‘those are the orders.’ He also walked off with my ignition key. I spent the night in the car, as did a number of other unfortunate travellers who were stopped in the same way. One proverb the Russian language shares with the English is ‘More haste, less speed’.¹

If at banquets we outshone our Allies by our lavish hospitality, they were infinitely more hospitable than we were in our less official dealings with them. I felt this the more keenly since in my Caucasian homeland hospitality has always been regarded as one of the essential virtues.

I remember one occasion when I had a puncture just as I was passing Gatow Aerodrome. I turned in to change my tyre. With the SVAG sign on my windscreen I was waved straight through the gates. Not only that, I was shown great military respect. I drove over to a hangar near which stood a number of planes. Had a

¹ *Tishe yedesh, dalshe budesh*: ‘The slower you go, the further you get.’—

Translator.

British officer done this at a Soviet airport, he would have been literally seized and marched off as a probable spy. Instead of this, as soon as I got out and opened my tool-box a number of hands came to my assistance. I was led off—not under arrest, but to be offered tea or lunch or cigarettes, while several British officers stood round and entered into conversation with me. When I returned to my car, not only had the spare wheel been put on, but the tank was filled up with petrol and the oil and water had been checked; and when I wanted to pay, they all laughed and assured me it was out of the question. This was something quite new to me; we Soviet folk did not know such relationships could exist.

One more example. I was driving together with Academician Keldych and Professor Kishkin from Dresden to Berlin when we ran out of petrol. As we stood by the road, a number of our own Soviet cars flashed by. Not one slowed down to see if anything was wrong. I even fired a shot under the tail of one of them but without effect. Then an American car came in sight. This time we made no sign. We did not want any diplomatic difficulties. But their car pulled up. Two men came over to us—the chauffeur and one of the passengers. Both spoke a little German (at that time I knew no English). When they learned what was the matter, the chauffeur drove his car side by side with ours and syphoned half the petrol from their tank into our own. I asked the American where I could return the petrol to him—but no! ‘It’s only a drop of spirit!’ he said and ‘Are we not allies?’ He gave me his card; I regret to say I lost it, but I think his name was Murphy. Whatever it was, I hope that he may read these lines and know what I felt. After his kindness the three of us learned Soviet men had much to talk about. As Kishkin said, here was one of those ‘accursed American business men’ giving us, without our even asking for it, what we should have had to ‘poleaxe a Russian to get’.

And here is an instance of our own behaviour. One day a British General rang me up and asked me to come round. He introduced me to a Yugoslav Air Force Colonel who, it seemed, had been sent by his government as their representative on the Control Commission. ‘It’s one of your men,’ said the General, smiling perhaps a trifle cynically. ‘I imagine you will want to find him quarters and look after him.’

I took the Yugoslav Colonel to my own quarters and rang up Lt.-General Dratvin, Deputy Soviet Commander-in-Chief. He said he had booked our visitor a room in the SVAG hotel. But when evening came it turned out that there was no room for the Colonel

and Dratvin hinted that our men were 'checking up on this gentleman'—that is to say, the NKGB had doubts about him.

'Then what shall I do with him?'

'I don't know. If anybody else had passed him on to us, it would be much simpler, but we can't trust the British.'

I said I was not asking about the British General but about this officer from our friendly 'Soviet' Yugoslavia.

'I know, Comrade Tokaev, but the NKGB knows what it is doing. Comrade Serov (head of NKGB and NKVD in Germany) says this man is not to be allowed on Soviet territory.' (Our Berlin HQ was regarded as Soviet territory.)

By this time I was really ashamed. Without a word to anyone, I took the direct-line telephone and rang up Air Force Major-General Vassily Stalin, son of Stalin, who was then stationed in another German town. I said that if Marshal Tito learned of this outrage there might be difficulties. Vassily promised to talk to Serov, but a few minutes later he rang back to say that he had not been able to do anything.

'Could not, or they told you to say you could not?'

'You're not a child, Tokaev,' he said. 'We can't give quarters in our hostel to men we've seen today for the first time.'

'But he is the official representative of Yugoslavia. Whatever will Tito say, Vassily Yosifovich?'

'Let him say what he likes, it's no business of mine.'

'Ring up your father and ask him.'

'You are asking a lot.'

It was getting late. Breaking all the rules and orders, I offered the Yugoslav Colonel the hospitality of my own quarters, and he lived with me for some days, until he was at last found quarters *outside* the Soviet zone.

Weeks and months passed. Then one day there was a summons to the Special Department. A Major of the NKGB whom I had never seen before began to question me.

'Who passed this Yugoslav Colonel on to you?'

'The British Section, Comrade Colonel.'

'Did you go there yourself?'

'I did. I had often been there, and have since. My duties make it necessary.'

'What was the name of the British officer?'

'I do not know.'

'Green?'

'I do not know.'

'Johnson?'

'I do not know.'

'A Party member should know.'

'What a Party member should or should not know I am perfectly aware of, Comrade Major. Please do not let us go beyond the limits of official matters.'

'But you knew very well that in the opinion of the responsible office this Yugoslav officer was not to be provided with quarters in the SVAG area.'

'All I know is that every man has a right to lay his head somewhere, and I also know that the peoples of Yugoslavia have been shedding their blood in our common struggle with Nazism, and we should show them some respect.'

'I know all that,' said the NKGB man, 'but what right had you to offer him hospitality in your flat?'

'The right of offering hospitality to a man who had nowhere to go.'

'That was not your business, Comrade Tokaev.'

'I had rung up Dratvin and Shibailov and Vassily Stalin, and the officer in charge of the hostel, and every one of them washed his hands of it. Was the man to sleep in the street? A comrade in arms?'

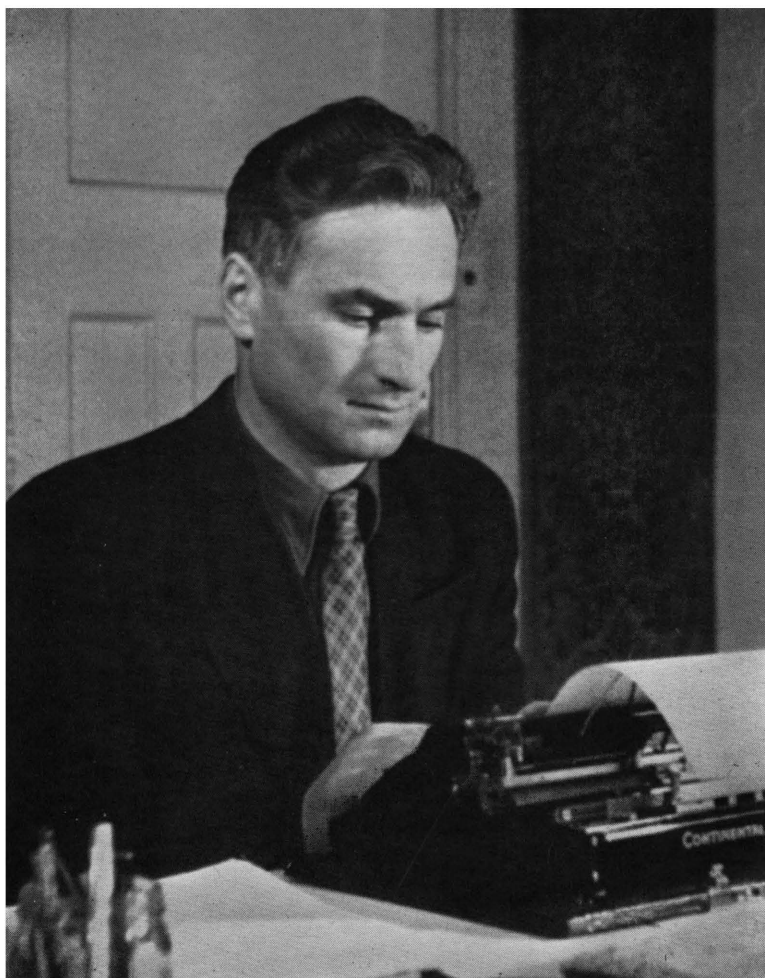
'He was a foreigner. You had no right to invite a foreigner into your flat. What did you and he talk about?'

'Comrade Major,' I said, 'till this moment I was under the delusion that the Yugoslavs were close friends of ours. If I am wrong, I am sorry. As for what we talked about—well, it was a little of everything—the weather, the war, the Germans, the Control Council, Moscow, Zhukov, Tito.'

'We may have to come back to this matter, Comrade Tokaev. For the present, may I warn you in future not to have dealings with foreigners?'

A curious feature of our work was our contact with the émigrés. One day Dratvin rang me up to tell me not to go that day to the Control Commission (which met in the Schöneberg district), because he had learnt that an attempt was going to be made to abduct me on the way. I was sufficiently interested to go round to Dratvin to discuss it with him. By this time we knew each other fairly well. It was under his direction that I had been working out the details of the organisation of the Soviet Section. He was a man of great courtesy and the most human general in the whole of SVAG.

'What the devil do they want me for?' I asked him.



The author on the eve of his escape

For the same reason, he said, that others had wanted Kravchenko—to make use of me by getting me to slander the U.S.S.R. and damage relations between East and West.

A few days later Dratvin told me that to get to the bottom of this business it would be well for me to meet a certain ageing émigré who lived in West Berlin, a Professor Stroyev. I invited him and he came to see me. He turned out to be a miserable-looking specimen who pretended to be a communist sympathiser but had been badly selected for the part, since he had only the most superficial notions of what communism was. What his conversation led up to, however, was that an attractive girl émigrée was anxious to meet me. I agreed. This young woman was more forthcoming though hardly better informed. She suggested that 'the whole Russian nation' was in an actively anti-Soviet mood, and that as a Russian patriot I ought, therefore, to go over to the 'free Western world'. Her whole mental outlook was that of the first generation of émigrés who have never grown up beyond 1917. She brought me a parcel of their literature, but I found it almost unreadable, so remote was it, both in thought and language, from present-day realities. I advised her not to waste her youth, and warned her that among her associates there was sure to be somebody in the pay of the NKGB. Some months later I heard that she had indeed dropped her activities and had actually crossed over to the Soviet zone. There she worked for some time as interpreter at a regional army depot; after which she was repatriated to the U.S.S.R. as one of the returning 'Soviet women patriots'.

I met many of these 'Russian refugees' in the course of my work. They are one of the strangest phenomena I have found in the Western world. They are such thin shadows of the past that one even doubts if they are real at all. One hesitates to speak frankly to them lest their brittle corporeality should disintegrate altogether, like thin ice in late spring.

I think it was in June, 1945, that Colonel Kovtyuch told me he had heard of an important Russian scientist who was hiding in the suburb of Schöneeweide. Curiosity as well as duty prompted me to drive at once to the address Kovtyuch gave me. What did I find? Merely a little group of ageing refugees who had left the Soviet Union immediately after the Revolution and were really in nobody's way at all. They told me, however, that at Baumschulenweg there were some genuine 'traitors' to the Fatherland, that is to say, people who had left later, either Vlasov's men or collaborators.

I went to see these 'traitors', but all I found was yet another group of early emigrants (although they were more recent than the

first lot). They were living in terrible poverty. I gave them 50 marks and next day brought them a case of foodstuffs. I found them pitiful in their childlike clinging to the notion that the old Russia they had known still existed under Stalin and was ready to rise up again. One old lady was quite excited when she learned that I knew Marshal Zhukov personally: all through the war they had admired him, thinking of him as a *Russian* general.

Zhukov was much amused when I told him of this afterwards. 'Did you tell them,' he asked me, 'how my armies mopped the floor with their miserable traitors? You should have done.' He then observed that they were not dangerous émigrés at all, just silly old people. I agreed. They were miserable old folk, starving. 'All our former enemies are starving now,' said Zhukov, and then looked up: 'Did you give them anything? Fifty marks and a case of tinned food? Shame on you, Comrade Tokaev.' He took up the telephone and asked for General Demidov who was in charge of supplies. 'Comrade Tokaev,' he said, 'has found some poor old refugees. Will you please issue them with all they need till we can make arrangements to send them home? Let them know that we are socialist conquerors! Let them tell their émigré brothers that it isn't Tsarist Russia, it's the Great Soviet Union that has come to Europe!' Demidov wasn't pleased—he detested every kind of refugee from the U.S.S.R.; but he had to do as he was told and the supplies went to the old people. Zhukov was a much bigger man.

By Soviet standards I had considerable freedom of movement. The prominence of my position gave me a certain latitude. But the eyes of the political police were everywhere and I lived in a thickening atmosphere of espionage. It was often difficult to know where truth ended and falsehood began (I never did discover what was at the bottom of Dratvin's message that there was a plot to kidnap me). My telephone was tapped regularly. Nothing that I did or said could pass unnoticed, unrecorded. My every step was shadowed, and the men who shadowed me did not always try to keep themselves concealed. I would be strolling along, taking a little exercise near my office, when up comes a seedy individual, just like a character in a Dostoyevsky novel, thrusts his mutton-faced head over my shoulder, and whispers softly: 'What are you doing here, Comrade Tokaev?' This was a standard political police technique; the purpose was to keep one aware that one was always seen and heard. At the same time these open gestures might help to cover up the more elaborate tricks of other NKGB agents whom I had failed to notice.

The time came when I could bear it no longer. I began to enter the Control Commission building with a sickness at heart. I had been told at the outset that my appointment was only temporary, but there seemed no sign of my being released. I hated this position which marked me as a special target for continual shadowing. I longed for scientific work pure and simple, and for a post in which I thought—fondly—that I would be less spied on.

In December, 1945, I had a long and tense discussion with Sokolovsky. He refused to countenance my arguments. Science, he said, could easily do without me, but the Control Commission could not; he would not release me unless direct instructions came from Moscow. 'And do not raise the matter again.'

I did not—with him. But I immediately made an application to Zhukov. After half-an-hour's talk with him I was no further forward, so I sent another application, sharply-worded, to Air Chief Marshal Novikov, GOC of the Soviet Air Force, insisting that he should rescue me from this hideously tiresome and useless existence. Why should I not go back to the Zhukovsky Academy, or at least be allowed to devote myself exclusively to flying matters and, in particular, to the study of rocket techniques in Germany?

Soon after this Novikov had a long telephone conversation with Zhukov and I was freed from my Control Commission duties and appointed Kutsevalov's Deputy for Science and Technology. Thus in January, 1946, I became, in practice, scientific adviser to Zhukov's Staff on aircraft and jet propulsion, and one of the first lecturers on these matters to technicians in the service of SVAG.

ROCKETS, TREACHERY AND MY CONSCIENCE

FOR THE first time since before the war I was able to devote myself to aeronautical research—I was a happy man. My family had joined me in Berlin. Friends with whom I had worked for years—Professors Ventsel, Kassatkin, Yurkevich, Burago, Pugachov, to mention only a few—came out to consult with me. I had a team working under me preparing a voluminous work on German aviation. I made a detailed report to Malenkov on the German *Luftfahrtforschungsakademie*.¹ I drafted a first Soviet course of lectures on the dynamics of high-speed jet aircraft and rockets such as the V-2. Following up certain German discoveries in applied gasodynamics, I wrote a paper on the principles of constructing gasodynamic tunnels with high Mach numbers. But by the time this study was in print I had been forced into exile and that work never saw the light of day. I was hampered at every turn by the political police who, despite their abysmal ignorance, even ruled over science. I was responsible to Kutsevalov, Kutsevalov to Sokolovsky, and Sokolovsky to Zhukov; but in reality we were all regarded as pawns by that very Serov who had annihilated the Caucasian nations and who could not forgive me for being a Caucasian. Above all he hated me because I always strove to remain, not merely a scientist with a scientist's sense of honour to science and humanity, but also a man with a man's duty to humanity, a duty to remain a man and never to be a toady. Whenever I could, I brushed aside scornfully the obstacles he placed in my way.

It was not a comfortable situation, but there was some peace to work and some satisfaction in it. That peace was abruptly interrupted. I was working in my flat late at night on April 13th, 1947, when I heard the telephone ring. My wife answered that I was asleep and not to be disturbed. A few minutes later came another call. This time it was Lt.-General Dratvin personally: he insisted on my being woken and answering at once. Clearly anxious, he ordered me to go round to him immediately. Before I could put on

¹ Aeronautical Research Academy.—*Translator*.

my coat there were two other calls—one from Kutsevalov and the other from Col.-General Kurochkin (Hero of the Soviet Union and First Deputy CO of SVAG).

Although careful not to show it, I was more anxious than they were. Through my own channels I knew that for months past I had been attracting the attention of none other than Stalin, and that Malenkov, Vosnesensky, Bulganin and Beria were getting regular reports from the spies who shadowed me. I greatly disliked this growing importance which I and my work were assuming in the eyes of the Kremlin.

It was dead of night—Soviet big-shots do much of their work while others sleep—when Kurochkin and Dratvin told me that, as a result of a telephone call from Bulganin (then Minister of the Armed Forces) to Marshal Sokolovsky, and a message from Air Marshal Vershinin (Air Force GOC), Kutsevalov and I had to fly to Moscow at once to take part in certain Government consultations. Vershinin told us to be at the Kremlin at 9.0 p.m. We were instructed to report on the so-called Sanger project—a German scientist's visionary plan for highly advanced aircraft. I asked for at least a fortnight in which to prepare papers. But Kutsevalov, my superior, nobly stepped into the breach.

To get admitted to the Kremlin was no simple matter, even if one had been summoned there. First I visited the Kremlin passes office, just to the right of the Spassky Gate; they already knew that I was coming, but they took some time to check my personal papers and issue my pass. Then I went to the narrow passage-way to the left of the Gate. Here two officers armed with automatics studied every word of my pass and my identification card, carefully checked my photograph and my papers, then saluted and said: 'Pass, Comrade Colonel.' I walked down the passage; at the end of it an MVD guard with fixed bayonet again meticulously examined my papers. I turned at right angles, down another passage which ran, following the Kremlin wall, between the wall and the Defence Committee Building, and came to the entrance of the Government Building. Here my papers were checked again, as carefully as before. Once inside, I was instructed to go down to the cloakrooms in the basement, then up a broad marble staircase which brought me to two more MVD guards, lieutenants standing at attention. My papers were again scrutinised, then one of the guards opened the door and I entered a horseshoe corridor running round the hall used for Government sittings. Another door, two more MVD officer guards and another check, and at last an MVD captain led me to my destination. There was a deathly silence in the spot-

less, brilliantly-lit corridor, softly carpeted, and lined with guards standing stiffly at attention, like handsome telegraph poles. I proceeded down the left arm of the corridor, past doors covered with sound insulation and bearing glass-covered inscriptions: Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. L. P. Beria; Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. G. M. Malenkov; Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. M. A. Vosnesensky . . . etc.

I entered Vosnesensky's suite. (Vosnesensky was also Chairman of the State Planning Committee as well as member of the Politbureau.) His principal secretary, a man whom I knew well, offered me tea but I refused. At that moment Vershinin came out of the inner room, holding his hands to his face, rocking his head as if in pain and crying: 'What a blockhead, what a blockhead, never before did I realise such a blockhead could exist!' He turned to me. 'Your Kutsevalov, Comrade Tokaev, has been babbling such twaddle in there that I burned with shame. Come on, drink that tea and let's go in.'

I made one last plea to be given time to prepare a proper report, but the GOC took me by the arm and dragged me in. At a long table drawn up endwise to Vosnesensky's desk sat Malenkov, Khrushchev (Minister of Aviation Industry), Colonel-General Yakovlev (principal designer of the Yak aircraft), Artem Mikoyan, (principal designer of the MiG aircraft), and Kutsevalov. I knew them all well. Malenkov motioned to me to sit down beside him and asked me if I was nervous. I said I was. 'Yes, Vershinin has told us you're not ready, but we are sure you are.' I suggested that I might not be able to answer the questions which were put to me, but Mikoyan told me to stop playing the fool. 'What on earth has made you so stubborn today? I know perfectly well what you are capable of doing.' My eyes involuntarily sought Kutsevalov's. His face was scarlet and sweating. I could see that I was now his great hope. I had obviously been right in telling him that these men would want information of a much more precise kind than he could possibly give them. It was easy to see what had happened. Kutsevalov had always taken at their face value such slogans as: 'The fortification does not exist which a Bolshevik cannot master.' Now he had 'faithfully promised Comrade Stalin' that 'within two years we shall realise Sanger's project'. The Kremlin had been listening to one of its own yes-men; now it turned for real information to one whom it knew not to be a yes-man. The situation was indeed ironical.

Sanger is a very gifted theoretician of rocket propulsion, whose

work I had followed ever since the mid-thirties when I first started to be interested in rockets as propulsion units. I had read his *Raketenflugtechnik* which later appeared in a Russian edition. In 1944 I heard that he was working on a giant high-altitude, long-distance, rocket-propelled, supersonic-speed aircraft. I got further information on his project during the Potsdam Conference, and together with two other Soviet engineers, Miklashevsky and Moisheyev, I began to search for concrete details. At last we obtained a lithographed copy of the exhaustive work, signed jointly by Sänger and Frau Bredt; copies of this very limited edition had been sent to Hitler, Goering, Milch and some other Nazi top men; I do not know how they reacted to it. Moisheyev and Miklashevsky passed our information over to Ustinov, Soviet Minister of Armaments; I preferred to reserve my judgment. I was inclined to think that Sänger was a gifted scientist but rather academic and lacking in practical experience, and I also thought that his physics and mathematics should be carefully checked.

Soon after this, Miklashevsky went back to Moscow to work on a translation into Russian of the Sänger-Bredt project, and in Soviet aeronautics the 'Sänger project' came to stand for all work on winged and piloted rockets capable of flying from Moscow to America and back. Stalin of course heard of it, and, with his usual single-mindedness, declared that he wanted Sänger's rocket-aeroplane at once and at whatever cost. We hadn't got the men to do it? Find them. Miklashevsky would not do? Try Moisheyev. Moisheyev was no good? Then release Tokaev from all other duties and put him on to the Sänger machine.

Now I was obliged to explain to the Kremlin that I had never been very sanguine about Sänger's idea. Sänger had produced a number of stimulating notions but he was not an engineer. I suspected some of his equations: my own calculations so far suggested that he was wrong in putting the thrust of his machine at 100 tons. In any case, we had no experience in the field of rockets, we lacked the men, the research institutes, the gasodynamic tunnels with high Mach numbers. The prospects were not nearly as rosy as they had seemed to the layman.

'All the same, it *would* cross the Atlantic?' Vosnesensky asked smiling.

'That would depend on the part of Europe from which it took off.'

One of the others said that it was not essential to cross the Atlantic, a trans-Arctic trajectory might be best. I tried again to deal with the practical difficulties. Our metallurgists had not yet pro-

duced metals sufficiently heat-resisting to use for the combustion-chamber. Soviet industry, I thought, was for technical reasons still far from being able to cope with such a job. For this reason alone the project was still only a dream.

There was an avalanche of questions. Could I confirm the rumour that Professor von Braun, principal designer of the V-2, had wanted to take refuge in the U.S.S.R. but had been scared off? Was it true that another rocket expert, Wagner, had tried to get in touch with his Soviet opposite number but had been cold-shouldered? Was it true that Professor Hoffe, the authority on optics, wished to work for the U.S.S.R.? Did I agree that the British and Americans were rapidly netting all the German rocket experts?

I gave honest answers. We certainly were lagging behind, I said; we were given to boasting of our achievements while the others went ahead but said nothing. One reason for our lag was the constant hindering by our own security organs who were obsessed with the notion that we were about to be kidnapped by some foreign intelligence service. It was also true that the British and Americans were busy removing all that was useful from the Göttingen and Braunschweig experimental research institutes. If we did not take energetic steps we should be left far behind.

Malenkov made an unflattering remark which I left unanswered. Vosnesensky returned to the Sänger project. Did I consider that we ought to start work on it, and if so, what would be required of the Government? I said that work in such a field could not but be profitable, quite apart from the idea of constructing trans-Atlantic aircraft. Any work, interjected Vosnesensky, needs to have a concrete aim; I replied that the military purpose was but one of several aims which such work might serve; for instance, sooner or later we would have to consider the problem of inter-planetary travel.

'The moon attracts you, Comrade Tokaev?'

'I confess, it does.'

'You are a romantic by nature, Comrade Tokaev?'

I agreed that this was possible; but however this might be, research along Sänger's lines, I continued, would help us to throw light on a number of parallel problems: that of heat-generation at very high speeds, of the influence of shock waves on the boundary layer of ceramic; of metallurgy; and other problems. It would also train us in the posing of problems. We should be looking ten to fifteen years ahead, and this meant that we should be preparing cadres for the future.

Malenkov leant forward. 'But for the present, what we have to

think about are real rocket weapons and military aircraft, Comrade Tokaev,' he said quietly. 'We have actual enemies whom we have to be ready to resist with actual technical equipment. That is why we ask you once again whether you think it possible, and whether you think it necessary to form a special Government Construction Bureau for work on the Sanger project. What are your answers?'

I replied cautiously that at our present stage what we needed was to form a party of scientists and experienced engineers, not as yet to design a prototype but to give an opinion as to whether this was feasible. Such a team would, at the same time, assemble data, select personnel and so on.

Here Vosnesensky broke in to say that Comrade Bulganin had asked him what were my qualifications. I replied briefly, but Mikoyan added that it was really I who had designed the Utkha fighter (which was finally produced the following year by his Experimental Bureau of Design); he also said that I was a great enthusiast for aircraft of the type of the British Vampire and De Havilland 110.

Vosnesensky went back to the Sanger. Would it not be better to set up an experimental rocket bureau in Germany rather than in the U.S.S.R., to attract as many German experts as possible? I said that this was bound to meet with displeasure from our Allies. There were cynical smiles at this and Malenkov said scornfully: 'Nonsense, what have they to do with it? We are not interested in what they may say!'

I pointed out that it would be difficult to work secretly in Germany, and that the best place for research was the TzAGI institute in Moscow.

'That will be decided by Comrade Stalin,' said Vosnesensky.

Malenkov and Vosnesensky questioned me on whether a certain party of scientists in Germany were capable of working on the Sanger scheme. I said that they were all Germans and I could not guarantee that there was not a foreign agent among them—I had not chosen them. In any case, they did not all have the necessary qualifications and they had had nothing to do with Sanger's proposals.

'But Comrade Kutsevalov has just reported to us that this group is capable of working out the Sanger project without delay,' said Vosnesensky sharply.

I was obliged to say that it was I, not Kutsevalov, who had followed their work. The head of the group was a certain Dr. Lange who, in my opinion, was shallow and short-sighted, without even

any great engineering sense. I enumerated the problems on which these men were actually working and said that they could, at best, be only an auxiliary to a proper research group.

On this the consultation ended. Malenkov and Vosnesensky went to report to Stalin and it was left to Khrushchev, Ustinov and myself to work out the terms of the Government decision; we were joined by Vershinin and then by Generals Kutsevalov and Lukin.

Vershinin said that we had plenty of time as Malenkov and Vosnesensky would have to report fully to Stalin. Khrushchev said dryly that he had already prepared a draft resolution, at which nobody seemed surprised. There was desultory conversation about the atmosphere in Berlin and constant American infringements of flight regulations. Ustinov asked me if the regulations really were infringed. Having failed to pass on the enquiry to Vershinin, I confirmed that they were. 'So they really want to frighten us?' said Ustinov. 'Are they getting very arrogant?' I avoided answering on the plea that I wasn't a political expert. Vershinin said that the Americans' tactics were childish, and that the British were at least more adult.

Then the conversation turned, curiously enough, to Poland. Had I been there? What had I seen, in 1945, when I went there on behalf of SVAG? I told them the bitter truth of the situation—the deep resentment of the Germans turned out of the 'ancient Slav lands' and their belief that there would never be peace until justice was done and the lands were German again. As I told story after story, they were silent. Their reaction, I realised, was the same as that of SVAG when I first made my report on returning from Poland. The members of SVAG had thought that 'what the Germans needed was to have their faces bashed in'. Indeed one commissar, Colonel Belykh, had remarked that the way to make sure that the Germans were kept down was by means of cross-breeding them with Slavs, and from that standpoint the mass raping of German women in the days following victory had been a 'grand achievement'—he spoke of it as 'an advance'!

Seeing the uncompromising expression on their faces, I turned to another aspect of the Polish question. Near Stargard, I told them, I had stayed one night with a Polish family who had recently been allocated a beautiful house built by some Germans who had been deported. My host was in the new Polish police service. In the course of the evening his talkative wife said that all Russians seemed to have been born heartless—they were cruel, callous and never satisfied except when they were conquering new lands and

inflicting outrages on the conquered people. The husband nodded his agreement. I tried to argue with them; after all they should have been pro-Soviet—the U.S.S.R. had given them everything they had, but they remained unshaken in their conviction, both that the U.S.S.R. was old Russia over again and that Russia was their enemy. I did not need to point to the moral of my stories. On our north-western frontier we had made two enemies.

‘Yes, yes, yes . . .’ said Vershinin, very slowly, but nothing more was said. Khrunichev read out his draft resolution: to form a special Government Rocket Commission attached to the Council of Ministers, having as its terms of reference to co-ordinate all work connected with the designing of a heavy long-distance rocket, its membership to include myself as representative of the Air Forces, Professor-Academician N. M. Keldych for the Ministry of Armament, and General Lukin for the Ministry of Aviation Industry.

A sharp dispute arose over Lukin, whom I knew well; before the war he had been manager of an aircraft factory. During the war he was made a Hero of Socialist Labour and advanced to the rank of Air Force Major-General. After the war he had denounced many leading Air Force officers, including Air Chief Marshal Novikov, who was dismissed the service, and Colonel-Generals Repin and Shakurin, while he advanced to the position of Deputy Minister. As such he had gone to Germany to oversee the savage pillage of German property and the compulsory transfer of German scientists to the Soviet service. SVAG had received countless complaints of his brutality; the Germans considered him a savage. More than once I had spoken about this to Kurochkin, Dratvin and even Serov. I wrote even to the Central Committee of the Party.

As may be imagined, I was no friend of Lukin, but whatever my feelings might have been I should have felt obliged to protest now. I said outright that I could not work in the Commission if it included Lukin, since he would discredit it completely in Germany, where the Commission had to work. Lukin sat through my declaration without raising his eyes. Khrunichev, his chief, himself changed colour but said nothing. Vershinin, who, for some reason, was on my side, laughed. ‘Ah!’ he said to Khrunichev, ‘what do you say to that, Mihail Ivanovich? My men can bite, eh?’ ‘Indeed, Comrade Vershinin,’ said Khrunichev, ‘and if they’re all like Comrade Tokaev, you’ll soon be able to take over the aviation industry as well.’ He turned to me: ‘So you are against the inclusion of Comrade Lukin?’ ‘Indeed I am.’ Vershinin backed me up, Ustinov

did not . . . I then suggested Air Force Major-General Bolkhovitinov, 'first as the designer and constructor of the first Soviet rocket fighter, secondly as the editor of the Russian version of the Sanger-Bredt project, and thirdly as a man of great intelligence'. Khrunichev and Ustinov hastened to say that Bolkhovitinov did not enjoy the full confidence of the Government. My heart sank for Bolkhovitinov; to what length of devotion to his country had he not gone, yet the Government did not 'fully trust him'!

The decision as to personnel was now postponed until Malenkov's and Vosnesensky's return. During the interval Lukin came up to me. His lips quivered as he asked me if I could not have found a more suitable moment to pour out my dislike of him. I replied that this was surely the most suitable of moments, that I had long ago warned him that the exercise of arbitrary tyranny was dangerous. 'Besides,' I added, 'you are no authority on rockets, you would have nothing to do in this commission.' Without a word he left the meeting, and I never saw him again. I had made a venomous enemy, foolish enough, however, to think that my hostility was solely due to my ambition to become deputy minister of aviation industry. How blindly Lukin misjudged me. I was still a mere lieutenant-colonel because I detested bureaucrats and counter-revolutionaries; he, for all his lack of ability, was a general because he liked them.

By the time Malenkov and Vosnesensky returned, Mikoyan and Yakovlev had also left, and only Khrunichev, Vershinin and Ustinov were present.

Khrunichev mentioned my objection to Lukin. Vosnesensky, his piercing eyes fixed on me, asked me for my reasons. I repeated them. For some moments he tapped the table-top, then asked Malenkov his opinion. Malenkov did not reply. I could not refrain from repeating: 'If Comrade Lukin is included, we shall get no concrete results, because the Germans will be afraid of us.' 'I rather think I share Comrade Tokaev's opinion,' said Malenkov; and so the matter was decided, for Malenkov then was not merely a Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, but also Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party, the man next in power to Stalin and Zhdanov. The Resolution which Khrunichev had prepared was passed, leaving details to be settled 'at a Politbureau meeting'.

Before the meeting broke up there was a final discussion of the technical details. Khrunichev said that his ministry should not be responsible for the new Commission, as it was already over-

burdened with work, in fact it had perhaps 'made a mistake in undertaking to develop the V-2'.

'I agree with you,' said Malenkov. 'I paid a visit recently to Noginsk' (this was where the work on the Soviet V-2 was going on) 'and I was most dissatisfied. You don't seem to make any progress at all—it's still only the same old V-2. What are you thinking of, Comrade Khrunichev? We are not going to fight a war with Poland; we have got to remember there are vast oceans between ourselves and our potential enemy.'

This cynical remark was made in 1947, when we were still sitting with the Americans on the Control Commission and the Soviet peoples were filled with gratitude for American aid. It confirmed my view that Malenkov was at that time the worst of the warmongers, and blackened my mood as I left the Kremlin.

In the courtyard, I found among the shiny black government limousines the one which was assigned to me, and in it the girl driver, fast asleep. I told her to go home, I would like to walk, I lived quite near. She was a little shocked and worried at this. 'If they find out, I'll get into trouble, with Personnel,' she said, but I reassured her and slowly made my way home. I was glad of the fresh air, for my thoughts were in confusion. One thing stood out clearly: so long as I was at some distance from the Kremlin, I could still, in most things, act in accordance with my principles; but would this still be my position once I was a special tool of the Kremlin, the direct agent of those who—as it now impressed itself upon me—were the worst enemies of my country, the destroyers of democracy and of all the finest ideals of the Revolution?

Through my mind flashed the ribbon of my life. I remembered Riz saying at an underground conference in Sevastopol that serving Soviet imperialism meant preparing for another war the moment the German one was over. I remembered Schmidt, a Leningrad comrade, saying long before the war: 'Either we turn our scientists into revolutionaries, then total wars will become impossible; or we fail, and those scientists will supply Stalin with weapons of mass destruction which will be met with like weapons; then nothing will be left of such cities as our Leningrad but a mortuary.' I remembered Klava Yeryomenko, who was then still at liberty, saying to me only the previous autumn: 'It will be your duty to kill Stalin if he asks you to make him rockets and bombers.'

I had once been a grimy-handed worker believing in peace and in a future golden age. Again and again I had been accused of crimes, and this only because I had tried to do my duty as a whole man. Now I had risen to honours and position, and my brain and

my knowledge were valued by the Kremlin. My value to them was not as a man, but only as a brain which could provide them with the weapons of destruction they required. Was it possible for me, Grigori Tokaev, the man in whose veins ran the blood of generations of peace-loving workers, to whom strange Englishmen and Americans had ungrudgingly extended a helping hand, while my own country's tyranny turned us into savages and boors—was it possible for me to sink so low?

I TALK ROCKETS WITH STALIN

THE FAMILIAR walls of my Moscow flat, with its desk, its books, welcomed me and the friendly divan offered me comfort—but only for my bones; my mind peered apprehensively ahead. I knew that the climax of the conflict was approaching, and I craved for the consultation of friends, above all Riz, Comrade X and Klava Yeryomenko. One old Moscow army friend did ring me up—I'll call him Moscovsky—but I knew that I must get some sleep. 'Give me a couple of hours and then come round,' I told him. But before I had closed my eyes there was another call, from an acquaintance who, on hearing my voice, came along at once. We went to a restaurant. He plied me with questions about Berlin. At first they amused me, then they startled and at last alarmed me. Was it true that the Anglo-Americans were already threatening us with atomic weapons? Was it true that Field-Marshal Montgomery had let the cat out of the bag about his warlike intentions to Marshal Zhukov? I knew what these rumours were worth, but now I realised that responsible people in Moscow believed them. Somebody had made them seem more real than life to people in the Kremlin. Was it because of these 'dangers' that I had been summoned?

I told my friend not to be a foolish scaremonger, and I gave nothing away. The fact that one is in opposition to one's country's rulers does not necessarily mean that one should give away their secrets, however criminal, for those secrets are, in spite of all, the secrets of the country as a whole: that is one of the ironical dilemmas from which organised society cannot escape.

From the restaurant we went to call on Gorchakov. He was much grander than when I had last seen him; now he was a general working in the Kremlin. At what? At a new profession: he described himself as a *tolkach*—a prompter; he stood at his boss's back and gave him a push whenever he flagged. He had won this position for himself by reason of his own unflagging parade-ground mentality. Gorchakov already knew where I had spent the night—he had heard Vosnesensky telling Malenkov. I needn't worry, he said; we would soon make mincemeat of all those Churchills and Attlees, Trumans, Blums and Schumachers. Comrade Zhdanov thought

we were too soft with all those capitalists. 'But we'll soon drive them all out of Berlin.' I gasped. 'Do you really think so?' I asked. 'No, it's not what I think, I am only a soldier serving the Party and the Army. It's what the Party thinks—yes, and the whole nation.'

Outside the U.S.S.R., as I now realise, such a statement, even by a general, need not have been taken seriously. But Gorchakov was right: he did not think for himself, he had got to where he was precisely because he did not. Consequently what he said really did express the Kremlin's mind. To the Gorchakovs it was eminently simple: 'we'—that is to say 'we alone'—had captured Berlin; hence, Berlin was ours. 'Have you forgotten,' I asked him, 'that it was the Americans who conquered Thuringia?' He stared blankly: 'Thuringia,' he said, like one reciting a lesson, 'is an integral part of the Soviet zone of occupation.'

When I finally got home, Moscovsky was waiting for me. He too had been told by one of the people present at the Kremlin conference that I was in Moscow.

For my sake, as well as for the sake of our cause, he and my other underground comrades were alarmed. They understood my difficulty but held that I had not the moral right to furnish Stalin with rocket weapons. They wanted to save me, and they thought they had found a solution: they believed they could get me appointed to the teaching staff of the General Staff Academy. I agreed at once and Moscovsky told me what steps to take. I breathed a little more freely.

We talked of other things—the group would have liked me to get some papers to the British Foreign Minister, then Ernest Bevin. But though no State secrets were involved, I could not see my way to say yes. We discussed the latest trends in the U.S.S.R. All round there was a rigorous tightening up of security. After the Guzenko leakage the MGB and MVD had undertaken draconic measures. Now every Soviet man and woman abroad was expected to play some part in the feverish efforts to obtain atomic secrets. And for what end? I knew the answer, Moscovsky merely confirmed it with fresh, precise indications. No longer was it communism with a coating of Russian racialism, but Russian racialism using communism, where it suited, as camouflage.

Zhdanov's views enjoyed unrestricted dominance. The Biddle Smith affair had lashed anti-Americanism to a new level. Against Zhdanov there was only Beria, who was fighting for the letter of the Constitution, especially where the non-Russian peoples of the Union were concerned. But with Zhdanov against Beria there was also Molotov

and in his conflict with Beria Molotov enjoyed Stalin's support, and thus also Malenkov's.

The conclusion was clear: the time had come once again to fight. The Nazi-fascist external danger had receded, leaving us to fight the internal fascist evil.

Late that afternoon I at last came back to my flat. Very soon an urgent telephone message from the Kremlin MVD office ordered me not to go out any more. My private telephone line had been permanently connected to them; I was to await the summons. Where to? When the car comes, the driver will know the destination, I was told. But no driver came. A considerable time passed. Then the telephone rang again. I recognised the voice, yet could not credit it.

'Serov speaking,' it said softly.

Serov? Surely not *the* Serov—the Serov I thought was in Berlin.

'Ivan Alexandrovich Serov,' the speaker confirmed. 'Did you not recognise my voice?'

My car had gone astray. He sent his adjutant, Captain Nikitin, urgently to fetch me. (In fact, my charming chauffeuse was waiting for me *outside*, not daring to come in!)

Kremlin MVD manners took possession of my life. With a curt rat-tat at the door, Nikitin came straight in. 'Where is your gun?' I drew the corner of my tunic aside. He told me to disarm. I acquiesced at once; I knew the drill: nobody was allowed to carry arms when visiting Stalin. We drove swiftly through Moscow, the special Government siren sending traffic policemen into wild action clearing a road for us. Often I had seen Ordzhonikidze, Tukhachevsky, Voroshilov, Stalin, Andreyev, Kaganovich, Beria, Kalinin, Molotov, Zhdanov, Vosnesensky, thus flash across the stream of traffic; now I was doing it myself. The honour did not delight me.

The car halted at the Borovitzky Gate. Armed guards, who of course knew Nikitin and his driver and car, nevertheless examined my papers with painstaking care, including the special pass Nikitin himself had made out. We drove in, and next halted at the entrance to Stalin's offices. Outside, two hefty armed MVD men checked my papers. We entered the building, and two more guards checked us in. A senior lieutenant of the MVD took my greatcoat. We mounted the stairs—another check. A short corridor, beautifully lit with indirect ceiling illumination now offered me an amazing sight: on either side, back to the wall, stood a continuous chain of MVD officers. In absolute silence I marched down this human filter; it was like an alley of tall conifers. Nikitin indicated a door on which there was no inscription at all.

I found myself in the room of Stalin's personal secretary, Major-General Poskriebyshv. I had once known him well. I recognised his hunched back, his pock-marked cheeks and forehead. With him was Serov, in uniform of dandyish perfection, his well-nourished flesh firm and gleaming. Poskriebyshv, the 'Soviet Rasputin', greeted me without moving from his chair, and demanded the reason for my lateness. Serov and I exchanged polite phrases. With exaggerated lethargy of movement, the secretary sidled to the door at his back and a few moments later beckoned us in.

In the far right-hand corner, as I entered, stood Stalin's desk. Against the inside wall, on my left, Malenkov, Beria, Vosnesensky, Mikoyan, Voroshilov, Zhdanov, and Molotov were seated at a table. There were vacant chairs at head and foot. Stalin, on his feet, came up close to me and greeted me. I was to sit at the end of the table, in the chair usually taken by Andreyev, who at that moment was away in the Ukraine, together with Khrushchev and Kaganovich. Throughout the sitting, Serov stood ready at my back. Slowly Stalin returned to his place. He took up a copy of the Sanger-Bredt book. Did I know it?

I did. I also knew that only a few days before, in an important interview, Stalin had, through Alexander Werth, assured the world that war was far from his thoughts! In a few moments I was outlining the subject of the giant rocket craft again. Beria gave me a faint encouraging smile. The others remained impassive. I spoke for about three-quarters-of-an-hour, standing; Stalin also stood, sucking at his pipe. At moments he came close up to me, and, lips parted, peered into my eyes, as if trying to decipher my inward thoughts. Of course he had been exhaustively informed who I was, what I had been. It was a trial of strength, speaking extempore, without any notes, but I held those renegade eyes. Only Stalin asked me questions; the others sat like schoolboys in their master's presence.

Most of all, at first, I think my reference to our backwardness startled him, but I had considered it my duty to my country to let him know how profoundly German applied science had impressed me. They were at least ten years ahead of us. During the war, they had found the way to construct fine jet and rocket-propelled aircraft and missiles, while we, in 1946, were still no further forward than the manufacture of their V-2. Speaking quietly, Stalin replied.

'In other words, we shall have to learn from the *Nazis*—is that it?' he asked, striding up and down the room. Then, again coming right up to me, and sucking furiously at his pipe: 'And what's the reason?' he demanded. 'What do *you* think the causes are?'

It was a very trying moment. I could have reminded him of such designers as Stechkin, Tupoliev, Putilov and Leibenzon and their arrest and imprisonment under Yezhov. I could have asked him what he had expected when he and his men had removed Novikov and other high-ranking Air Force leaders in 1946. I might even have remarked that, only a few hours ago, Vosnesensky had rejected Bolkhovitinov as 'unreliable'. But I felt Serov at my back and the ranks of MVD guards outside, and I also had to think of that refuge appointment to the General Staff Academy. For the sake of my revolutionary democrat comrades, if nothing else, I had no right pointlessly to provoke the watch-dogs of Stalinism.

'Well, come on,' Stalin repeated his request, 'what's wrong with us? Why have we dropped behind?'

'It is hard for me to say, Comrade Stalin,' I replied. 'Perhaps the Germans have given more thought to war than we have. Perhaps in their history militarism occupied a more fundamental place.'

Even as I spoke, I could see that my reply was displeasing to every single one of the tyrants. It was above all clear in the sudden wrinkling of Stalin's eyes. Serov tackled me about it a fortnight later. I should never have said 'more thought than we', or 'occupied a more fundamental place'. One must never forget that in the U.S.S.R. far more attention is paid to the literal meaning of statements, taken as precise formulations, than elsewhere. The corollary to my first statement was that the Soviet Union had given thought to war. But it was official belief that we only gave thought to peace. The corollary of my second statement was that we too had our militarism. Officially we had none. Involuntarily I had said what I really believed.

For some moments Stalin paced up and down in silence. Then he swung straight into the attack on the Sanger plan. What could I advise? I advised working on it.

'Very good, Comrade Tokaev.' He raised his index finger. 'Without confidence that a thing is indispensable, one would never begin anything. I see you hold that we cannot think of designing this aircraft.'

Again I went over the ground I had covered earlier, and Mikoyan said he was inclined to support me. Beria joined him. What Malenkov and Vosnesensky thought I already knew—they wanted the giant bomber. Zhdanov and Molotov remained as cautiously silent as a couple of grumpy hedgehogs. Voroshilov fidgeted with his feet like a schoolboy, every now and then giving me an involuntary little kick. Still Stalin hesitated. When at last he came up to

me again, his silent stare lasted a long time, as if he wanted to test my endurance. Then, slowly, he said: 'Hmmm! But if we take up the Sanger suggestion at all, it will be in order to make a real rocket aeroplane, not just to get abstract scientific information.'

I felt my cheeks turn scarlet. I think they all noticed this. Miko-yan watched Stalin with anxiety in his eyes. I wiped the sweat from my face. Voroshilov plucked my sleeve and made me sit down. But after some minutes of the silence, I could no longer contain myself. I leapt to my feet and cried: 'Nevertheless, Comrade Stalin, theoretical and experimental work on so grand a theme would mean a great advance for us, and that is no less important than the actual rocket!'

The effect was startling. For the first time, Stalin moved quickly, swinging round to peer at me. Beria took off his *pince-nez* and began cleaning them with great concentration. The faces of Zhdanov and Molotov alone still remained expressionless. And yet—I was lucky—Stalin this time did not take offence, as he usually did at the least hint of a differing opinion. I do not know why, but he merely ignored my remark. Or rather, at about a pace from me, he suddenly asked me if I had ever heard of a Mr. Truman. 'Well,' he said, 'for your information, Comrade Tokaev, that little business man is more interested in real rockets and aircraft.'

Now, slowly pacing about, addressing nobody in particular, with slow gesticulation he reasoned aloud: Yes, we needed theory, theory and practice were inseparable, but theory cut off from reality, from immediate needs, became academic and barren. Mere theory would never give us the weapons we must have. Mr. Truman would never wait while we played with theory. Tokaev suggested an experimental research station, but the U.S.S.R. was at this juncture exclusively interested in whether we could or could not make Sanger's aircraft. If we could, discussions with Mr. Truman would be easier. If not, we had to find something else. Then, as if it had suddenly occurred to him that a detail had been forgotten, he again came close to me and said, very seriously: 'We shall back you up, Comrade Tokaev, we shall afford you all the assistance you require. This is a task of great State importance. Do you grasp that, Comrade Tokaev?'

'I do understand, Comrade Stalin,' was my reply. 'All I am capable of shall be done, but . . .'

He interrupted me. 'We ask no more than that,' he said, and asked Vosnesensky to draft the decision.

While this was being done, a number of secondary matters were discussed, none of them of great moment, except to myself. Stalin

asked me where, 'by the way', was Sanger at the moment? I said that I could not answer this for certain, as I had no reliable information. He approved of this reply. 'It is best to be frank,' he said. 'But what would you say, on your unchecked information?'

'I would say he is in France, Comrade Stalin.'

'In France?'

'Yes, Comrade Stalin, in France.'

'But whatever is he doing there? If you said America, one would understand. Or Britain. But whatever is he after in France? Comrade Serov, why does Sanger happen to be in French hands?'

Serov (stiffly): 'The information, Comrade Stalin, is that Sanger is in Vienna.'

Stalin: 'Yet Comrade Tokaev says he is in France. Which of you two is right?'

Tokaev: 'Comrade Stalin, I made so bold as to say that my information has not been checked, and I was not prepared to answer precisely.'

Stalin: 'And what about your information, Comrade Serov?'

Serov: 'I will take immediate steps to find out, Comrade Stalin, tomorrow . . .'

Stalin: 'Very good, then do so. It seems to me a very poor sum total, if we smashed the Nazis, took Berlin, took Vienna, but the Americans got von Braun and Lippisch, the British I am told got Buzemann and perhaps Tank, and now the French have got Dr. Sanger . . . You must get that man, Comrade Serov!'

Here Vosnesensky, having scribbled down a draft with the pencil which Stalin had handed him, turned to the boss and remarked that 'yesterday' Comrade Tokaev had spoken to him and Malenkov about a very important matter, the aerodynamic wind tunnels at Kochel. I now related how towards the end of the war the Germans were building a new gasodynamics laboratory at Kochel in Bavaria—with Mach numbers of the order of 7 to 10. My Berlin party of scientists had suggested building a similar tunnel in the U.S.S.R. I had sent in a proposal to Khrunichev, but had had no reply whatsoever.

Stalin (to Malenkov): 'Why did he not get an answer?'

Malenkov: 'I will find out, Comrade Stalin.'

Stalin: 'Will you continue, Comrade Tokaev?'

Tokaev: 'Had this unexpected question of the Sanger project not arisen, I was going to try and find ways and means to construct such a wind tunnel. I think a Mach number of the order of 10 is attainable, first, by the use of powerful engines; secondly, by the use of certain other new inventions; and thirdly, which is the most

important, by the use of some other gas, with other characteristics, in place of air.'

Stalin: 'Are you a chemist?'

Tokaev: 'No, Comrade Stalin.'

Stalin: 'What hinders your making use of the German engineers?'

Tokaev: 'Very many factors. First, the Germans are understandably still frightened, and this keeps them from making us offers, therefore we have not got all the valuable specialists; secondly, after last year's forced transfer to the U.S.S.R. of those who were already working for us, those left in Germany have lost confidence, and in many cases take refuge in the West; and thirdly, we ourselves are afraid of contact with the Germans.'

Stalin: 'But why on earth should we be afraid? Why, we have beaten them to the ground.'

Tokaev: 'Well, I myself, for instance, have been warned that they intend kidnapping me. . . .'

Stalin: 'Kidnapping? Who? Why?'

In place of answer, I looked across at Serov. They all turned towards him, but nothing more was said.

Stalin then remarked that Vosnesensky had said that I knew the principal designer to the Focke-Wulf aircraft manufacturers, Professor Tank. I confirmed that this was so. I had seen him first in 1940, when the Nazi Air Force Commission visited Moscow. (It gave me wry pleasure to remind them of that shameful visit.) I had also heard much about him since. Last year he had visited our headquarters in Berlin and asked us to give him some work.

Stalin: 'And why was he not given work?'

Tokaev: 'Generals Kutsevalov and Lukin said he was a former Nazi and so should not be given work.'

Stalin's features were gripped with icy rage. His piercing eyes swept the whole company, as if to ask how such idiocy was possible. He asked me my view. I said frankly that I had never agreed with Kutsevalov or Lukin on this matter. 'And in my opinion,' said Stalin, 'you were right. But where is Tank now?' I said I did not know.

Stalin: 'Comrade Serov, what does all this nonsense mean? Tank came over himself, asked for work, and was turned away. Find him for me!'

Once again, swallowing his gall, Serov said his 'Yessir!' It was the end of Kutsevalov. Serov now contrived to switch the blame for the loss of Tank on to that unfortunate fellow. So, soon after having partly clambered, partly been pushed by circumstances to

the Kremlin heights, he came tumbling down very low indeed. I tried to defend him, or at least to ensure that Lukin in all fairness should have most of the blame, but Vosnesensky hastily whispered to me that this would be useless, and it was not for me to deal out justice: Vosnesensky knew Kremlin manners. Stalin sent for his secretary, and asked to be put through at once to Marshal Sokolovsky, in Berlin.

While he waited, Malenkov asked me to tell Comrade Stalin what I had proposed regarding universities. I said that we had about 800 'VUZ'¹ educational institutions of university level, but many of them lacked laboratories for practical work. After what I had seen in Germany, I was confident that at relatively little cost I could repair the omission. For a moment there was some excitement in the Politbureau. Stalin smiled and nodded as if he liked my 'arrogance'. 'And why should you not make use of German possibilities, Comrade Tokaev?' he asked. I said firmly that I had already written about it to the Central Committee, but once again had had no answer, so I had concluded that my initiative was superfluous. 'No initiative is superfluous, Comrade Tokaev,' said Stalin. 'So the bureaucrats hindered you?' And he shot another glance at Malenkov. But here again, nothing more was said.

The resolution was now passed; it read: 'The Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. has resolved: first, to set up a special Government Commission to organise work and the collection and systematisation of scientific and technical information and for the selection of specialists on the Sänger project; secondly, to appoint as Chairman of this commission Colonel-General Comrade Serov, as Deputy Chairman Engineer Colonel Comrade Tokaev, and as members Academician Keldych and Professor Kishkin; thirdly, that the commission will immediately proceed to Germany to carry out all the preparatory work there, paying particular attention to the assembly of German research material and of German experts; fourthly, that the commission will present a final report on the Sänger project to the Council of Ministers not later than August 1st, 1947; and fifthly, that Comrade Marshal Sokolovsky will give the commission all possible support.'

Meanwhile, Poskriebyshv had got through to Sokolovsky and the Marshal was waiting on the line. We all heard Stalin's end of the conversation. Sokolovsky must have said that he did not know I was in Moscow. 'We sent for him unexpectedly when you

¹ i.e. *vysshnee uchebnoye zavedenié*.—Translator.

were away,' said Stalin. He had formed a good opinion of Comrade Tokaev. Kutsevalov was to be dismissed. Tokaev should be made Sokolovsky's second-in-command for scientific matters. Sokolovsky was to do all he could to help the commission which was flying out at once . . .

Sokolovsky, a highly sensitive, pompous man, was mortally offended—I had gone behind his back. But, he cried—so I learned later—even if I was Stalin's pet, if he chose he would crush me with his thumbnail like a flea.

I left the Kremlin a 'greater' man—with two new sworn enemies: for Serov too would have liked to crush me with his nail. But now he took me in his car, out through the Borovitzky Gate, and all round the Kremlin walls to the Spassky Gate, where my poor little driver was waiting with my car. It was already four o'clock in the morning. Day was not far off, and Serov had decided that we should leave for Berlin not later than ten.

SEROV DECIDES TO LIQUIDATE ME

THE COMMISSION was to set out the next day. Academician Keldych, Professor Kishkin and I arrived at Serov's house at ten o'clock. Serov was our security and administrative head and, no doubt to underline his view of our relative positions, he kept us waiting in our cars outside his door for two hours.

I had plenty to think about on the journey back to Berlin. Stalin had ordered me to find Sanger and Tank and to work on the Sanger project. The scientific task was interesting and in so far as the results could be useful to my country's self-defence, the country had a right to them. And if working in direct touch with the Kremlin was dangerous, the knowledge of the Kremlin which it would give me would be useful to our movement. Thus, however much I might wish to retire into obscurity, I had for the present neither the physical possibility nor the moral right to do so.

But the dangers, both physical and moral, stared me in the face. To begin with, I was now right on the exposed heights where every one of my movements would be followed more carefully than ever by the secret police. Secondly, I would be working under Serov, that personification of the worst side of the Kremlin—would I find it possible to do so without sullyng my conscience by collaboration either with the Kremlin's anti-Allied aims or with Serov's barbarous secret police methods? The full implications of this were not yet clear to me, but I already felt that I had entered on the last stage of a duel which must end either with the defeat of the Serovs or with my own final eclipse.

My alarm at what I had heard in Moscow of the Kremlin's views on the prospects of war was increased by two conversations on that same day. During the journey, Serov, talking of the rocket-propelled aircraft which Stalin required, made no secret whatever of its aim: 'War may well break out in two or three years,' that is to say, by 1951; this was probably too short a time for the construction of a powerful fleet of long-distance bombers, 'but it might be possible to ensure the production of long-distance blind-aim

rockets.' Still more sinister was the information given me by my colleague Kozyriov on my arrival in Berlin: Vassily Stalin had told him that the final blow against the West would come, as Serov had said, in three or four years, but he had also given him a reason for this haste—his father was getting an old man and the U.S.S.R. was to be freed from capitalist encirclement while he was still alive and at the helm.

Serov made clear his conception of our work, that same evening. He summoned me at ten o'clock and, when I came, telephoned curtly to someone whom he did not name and who arrived almost at once dressed in civilian clothes. I soon realised that this was a high-ranking spy; he put on the table a list of German experts in rockets, jet and other high-speed aviation matters.

'Now you just indicate which of these men you think may be useful,' said Serov, 'and I'll do my best to get them for you.'

I had already had an argument with Serov when, on the way to Berlin, I had flatly refused his suggestion to send me to the Western zones for 'personal talks' with German scientists, because behind this proposal I scented a plan to kidnap these Germans. Now I again shook my head. I wished to act openly. I told him I did not want to scare the Germans away from us. Serov argued that the Germans were ours for the taking and that his secret police network could handle the job. 'Such methods will not do for scientists,' I said. But neither this nor the argument that such activities would cause serious friction with the Allies convinced him in the least—the Allies would in any case soon be squeezed out of Berlin.

I had already pointed out that no mention of such work (kidnapping the Germans) had been made to me at the Kremlin; but such was the power which the Serovs had acquired over the years that, extraordinary as this may seem within the framework of totalitarian discipline, they often disregarded direct orders. (Thus on one occasion a telegram had come from Moscow to summon Dratvin to a General Staff Conference, but it so happened that, at that moment, Serov wanted Dratvin in Berlin, and so the order was tossed into the waste paper basket.) Within a few days Serov made a new demonstration of his power: he 'co-opted' Vassily Stalin as a member of the Commission.

Stalin's son by his second wife, the 'Tsarevich', as he was secretly nicknamed, was at that time 29. In appearance he was a first-rate example of a great man's pampered son. Whatever his faults, Stalin's presence commanded respect, but Vassily had a poor physique, a ramshackle bearing and the complexion of a debauchee. His

conception of foreign affairs was that of a schoolboy and his vanity was colossal. Without the sycophantic favours which were showered on him he would hardly have risen to the rank of captain; in fact he was a Major-General commanding an Air Force division stationed in Germany, and in 1948 became Lieutenant-General.

Though no doubt pre-arranged, the 'co-optation' of Vassily Stalin was made casually. One day when Serov and I were calling on Lieutenant-General Lukyachenko, Chief of Staff of SVAG, the door suddenly opened and Vassily came in and announced his readiness to 'assist' us. Serov asked me my opinion. I was horrified; we had Keldych and Kishkin in addition to myself as experts and Serov as administrative head; we didn't need an additional boss for the Commission, and we certainly did not need an ignoramus. I pointed out that the Commission had no legal power to co-opt. My objection took Serov aback. After some argument he said that he would telephone personally to Comrade Stalin to obtain his approval. For all I know this was done. At any rate, I was saddled with Vassily Stalin as an additional burden.

The man's attitude was utterly irresponsible. He seemed to be devoid of any sense of human decency. Germany was a playground to him, in which nothing was easier than to kidnap scientists of world reputation as 'a little present for Papa'. I also detested his corrupt mind and unclean tongue. There was a worthy German engineer who worked in a research party of which I was in charge; I counted him and his wife among my real friends. Vassily could not understand his work and suggested that I should dismiss him. I refused. 'Well then, introduce me to his wife, will you?' For him, Germans of the highest integrity were merely prey of one kind or another.

Naturally enough, he and Serov were completely agreed as to the method of recruiting German scientists. The first step was to pick a name from the MVD list, have the man summoned and interrogate him. Serov and Vassily Stalin would appear in civilian clothes as Soviet aeronautics experts. Talking through an interpreter (usually myself) the would-be kidnappers would mention to the German the great future the Soviet Union offered to such men as Professor Tank and Dr. Sanger. Knowing their real intention, I found an opportunity of telling one of these Germans who the two principal interrogators were. I did this with an easy conscience: I had made it clear at the Kremlin that, in my view, the co-operation of the experts was to be obtained only by honest means. If any German was going to join the Soviet service through my bureau he should do so with his eyes open.

What success I might have had if I had been able to talk to these men freely, as one scientist to another, I cannot say. All I know is that, as things were, not one of them showed the slightest inclination to engage in a search for Sanger or Tank. Both these men had completely disappeared, and if their closest fellow-workers had no knowledge of them, we were at a dead end.

As the date drew near on which our Commission was to hand in its report, I was summoned by Serov to discuss the situation. 'Why is it, Comrade Tokaev, that Dr. Lange and the others have refused to admit that they know where Sanger and Tank are? Why do they all seem to have agreed to say that they have never had anything to do with Sanger's project? Have you been priming these men?'

The question was disturbing. I could already see myself as a defendant in another 'Promparty'¹ trial. I fought back at once, telling Serov that I would inform Malenkov or even Stalin himself of this outrageous accusation and would demand an official enquiry. For the moment this frightened him; he said that he had only made a 'joke'.

Days dragged by. It became increasingly obvious that the Commission had failed to produce the required information. Meanwhile Dr. Lange declared his willingness to work on 'any project whatsoever'. It was my obvious duty to say that this was a statement which no serious scientist could ever have made; by putting my opinion on record I merely wanted to prevent the initiation of a piece of research which would have looked well on paper and might have satisfied the bureaucrats, but which would never have produced any results. Serov and Vassily Stalin, however, immediately attacked my action as sabotage. This time Serov went a step further.

'You told Comrade Stalin that Dr. Lange was connected with Sanger and could work on his project.' It was in fact Kutsevalov who had said this and I had said exactly the opposite. 'No, Comrade Tokaev, my information is that you said this.' I again denied it. 'Tokaev, I want to know your reason—did you then intend to deceive the Party and the Government?' The attack was following familiar lines. Once again I threatened to telephone to the Kremlin—there were plenty of people there who could confirm my version—but Dratvin, whom I consulted, advised me against it. For a junior

¹ The reference is to the trial of Professor Ramzin and others in 1930. The charge was one of sabotaging Soviet industry, to facilitate foreign intervention. Ramzin was sentenced to death, though this penalty was commuted to forced labour. *Promparty*: i.e. from *Promyshlennost*, Industry.—Translator.

like myself to tackle Serov, he said, was biting off too much. 'Better turn a deaf ear and a blind eye.' But how could I? The attack on me was Serov's revenge for the harm I had done him indirectly by telling Stalin of Tank's visit to SVAG a year earlier and of the rejection of his offer by Serov's men. 'I know,' said Dratvin. 'You were lucky in the witnesses you had. Without them Serov would have got rid of you long ago.'

'It is impossible to work in such an atmosphere, Comrade General!'

'Then pretend that it is possible, Comrade Tokaev.'

I did my best, but the situation grew daily more tense. At last I felt compelled to ring up Marshal Vershinin in Moscow, mentioning Dratvin's opinion that it was useless for me to resist Serov. From Vershinin's voice I could tell that he was more alarmed even than I was. He promised to have a talk with Malenkov, and perhaps also with Bulganin. Some hours later, I was roused in the middle of the night by a call from Moscow. It was Lieutenant-General Klovov, who had been the Zhukovsky Academy Commissar in 1941 and was now in charge of the political side of the Air Force under Marshal Vershinin.

'You've started a very risky tug-of-war, old man,' he said. 'Do try to tone things down a bit. Comrade Vershinin and I will do what we can, but you must back us up: do try not to fight with Serov.' They were frightened of Serov. Yet Serov was nothing but a policeman who should have been under their orders!

I have reason to believe that as a result of Vershinin's intervention Malenkov did telephone to Serov, and Gardinashvili told me later that the matter had also come up before Beria. (Beria, who was Serov's direct chief, disliked him, and was heard to say that it was 'going to be difficult for Tokaev to work in with that barbarian'.) Certainly there was an immediate change in Serov's behaviour. But it was short-lived. Very soon he returned to the attack, again with a proposal that I should go to Western Germany to 'get' Sanger and Tank. He would find an official reason for the trip. I could go to Gottingen, Braunschweig, Stuttgart and Munchen, and in all these places he would give me the protection of his own secret police.

I refused. Stalin had not charged me with such work. I insisted again that I was a scientist, not a kidnapper. 'You may put me under arrest if you choose, Comrade General, but I refuse to go.'

I neither wanted to take part in his plots, nor did I want him to think that I welcomed the chance of crossing the border with his permission. The reason I was able to refuse with impunity was that

I had made my attitude clear to Stalin as well as to Beria so that Serov was compelled to move cautiously. It was a dangerous game of chess, but so far my positional play was at least equal to Serov's, and I even allowed myself to flout his instructions when, a day or two later, he ordered me, through Kovalchuk, Lt.-General of the MVD, 'for my own protection', not to go out except in the official car driven by an MVD chauffeur, which he had placed at my disposal. If there is one thing that I have never been able to stomach, it is this sort of stupid, non-human espionage, and I told the MVD driver to go to hell, and continued to go about freely in my own car.

But time was passing and the blame for the Commission's lack of scientific information had to be placed squarely on someone. Serov's next move was to summon a full meeting of the Commission and to ask all of us to sign the following text which he proposed to cable to Stalin: 'Having examined the results of its work, the Government Rocket Commission hereby reports that owing to Comrade Tokaev's unwillingness to take the steps necessary for making contact with German experts, it has proved impossible to trace Dr. Sanger or Professor Tank, or to get together a party capable of doing the work.' Keldych and Kishkin signed meekly, Vassily Stalin triumphantly. 'Now you sign, Colonel Tokaev,' said Vassily. I refused, but none of my colleagues backed me up—they behaved like sheep—and the strongest pressure was brought to bear on me. Finally I signed; but I went straight from the meeting to Dratvin's room and telephoned both to Vershinin and Klovov. They promised to speak to Malenkov and Bulganin, so that Stalin should not hear only Serov's side of the story. Then I went home and typed out an exhaustive statement, including, in so far as I could judge them, even my own shortcomings in my work—I wished it to be as objective as possible.

A few days later I learned that Malenkov had had a talk with Serov and had ordered him to stop hindering me. I also heard that Marshal Vassilevsky, then Head of General Staff, had had a tense conversation with Marshal Sokolovsky who, before this, had been inclined to side with Serov (Serov and Sokolovsky are great friends).

I had won a victory. Perhaps unfortunately, for it buoyed me up so much that I spoke out with what Serov described later as 'sheer impudence' and told him to mind his own business, which was security, and not to interfere with mine, which was purely scientific work.

The struggle went on. Serov sent for Moisheyev in the hope of using him against me and ultimately of replacing me by him. He then proposed that Moisheyev and I should both go and see

a German engineer living in the British zone. I agreed, for I would now have an independent witness for anything that happened. (Serov suspected both Moisheyev and myself of wishing to become *nevozvrashchenty*,¹ but he did not think that we would be likely to plan this together and therefore felt it safe to use us as a check on one another.)

All we learned from the engineer was the address of another German scientist living in the Dahlem district of Berlin. Serov immediately became suspiciously anxious to get him. He sent Moisheyev and myself to interview this man. As Moisheyev knew no German I was able to give the scientist a hint of what was going on. Then, to keep Serov from hasty measures, I told him that the scientist was quite likely to come over to our side though he had not said it in so many words. 'How do you know?' asked Serov. 'Are you a thought-reader?' I replied that it was clear from what he did say that he was a Soviet sympathiser. 'What a queer type!' said Serov. I shall never forget the expression of alarm on Serov's face when I said jokingly: 'What do you mean, Comrade General? Are you suggesting that a man has to be a queer type to be a Soviet sympathiser?' I hastily assured him that I had spoken frivolously, but he never forgot that he had said something in my presence that could be used against him.

It was after this that the atmosphere of suspicion and hostility was suddenly thickened by such fantastic incidents and rumours that in cold print they will seem unbelievable; also I found myself on the borders of that dangerous, dim world in which several systems of espionage entwined.

One day the following conversation took place between an unpleasant Party fanatic named Stoliarov, working at SVAG, and myself.

'Comrade Tokaev, have you known Serov for long?'

'Quite a time, Comrade Stoliarov. Why does that interest you?'

'Know his wife?'

'No. Why do you ask?'

'Because of the gossip that you are having an affair with her and that this is the cause of your quarrels with Serov. Is there any truth in it?'

'What utter nonsense! I have never even seen his wife.'

'The talk is that you tried to seduce her and that Serov caught you with her somewhere in the woods.'

I was perfectly certain that Serov could not possibly suspect

¹ *Nevozvrashchenty*: 'Those who do not return.'—Translator.

me of this because, so far from being friendly with his wife I had not even known that he was married; so, with a laugh, I dismissed the matter from my mind.

A few days later, however, the following story was told me by an officer who was a member of our underground movement and who had just arrived from Moscow. According to 'his information' I had managed, with the connivance of one of Serov's adjutants, to get a key to Serov's flat; I had then gained the confidence of Serov's wife to such good purpose that she had passed on to me important information mainly concerned with Serov's quarrel with Merkulov (one time Minister of State Security, since executed together with Beria). Merkulov, so the story went, had his knife into Serov because of the Guzenko disclosures, but had never been able to get the better of him because Serov was protected by Stalin; but Merkulov was also the lover of Serov's wife, hence her hostility to Serov.

The next instalment was provided by a German doctor whom Serov considered to be one of his most reliable agents. This man suddenly asked me if he might put to me a personal question: was it true that Serov's wife had turned against him? He told me that the story was fairly widespread and had originated from circles around Pieck, Head of the East German Government.

I assured him that to the best of my knowledge it was all nonsense and that I did not even know whether Serov was married.

'Do you know a Mrs. Y?' he asked me. (I prefer not to give this woman's name.)

'I do. What of it?'

'Is she Serov's wife?'

'Very definitely she is not,' I replied.

'I wonder why she dislikes you so much,' he said, 'and why she spies on you.' Then he added: 'Perhaps she likes you too much.'

Imagine my surprise a little later, in September, 1947, when the same German brought me two photographs. One showed Serov and Mrs. Y in a compromising pose together, while the other showed —G. A. Tokaev and the same lady in similar circumstances. I showed the photographs to a friend of mine in the Special Department, and he of course confirmed that *both photographs* were highly skilled fakes. He suggested that this was the work of a foreign intelligence service, cleverly trying to drive a wedge deeper and deeper between me and Serov. Possible. Yet how clumsy! For this Mrs. Y was not Serov's wife, nor had she ever been anywhere alone with me; and that was certainly known at any rate to our MVD, who kept me closely shadowed.

It was all so silly that I thought I had nothing to worry about, but when I told this to my MVD friend he disillusioned me.

'I think I ought to give you another hint,' he said. 'We know just how often you visit the Skubinnas. Who is this Dr. Skubinna? Why have you been to so much trouble to get him a telephone, and special rations, money and work? Ivan Alexandrovich (i.e. Serov) doesn't like it at all.'

Curious! I suddenly recalled Vassily Stalin's keen interest in Frau Skubinna, but could make nothing of it.

I noticed, however, that on at least two occasions MVD agents acquired 'incriminating' evidence of my friendship with the Skubinnas. Once I called at their house only to find that Skubinna (who by then had left my service) was away in Western Germany (he returned a fortnight later). Helma, his wife, saw me out to the car, together with her son. It was a lovely day and we stood talking for some time. A Soviet agent photographed us. Another time I took the whole family out for a picnic: again there was an agent ready with his camera. Was the theory that the Skubinnas were my link with certain émigré circles?

All this was the lunatic fringe of the intrigues which were being woven round me. My biggest surprise came *after* my flight to the West: a Russian-language émigré paper came out with the brilliant discovery that I had 'fled' when General Serov caught me *in flagrante delicto* with his wife!

It was unfortunate for the friends I made in Germany that I did not pay greater attention to such hints as the one given me by the MVD expert in photography, or by Serov who asked me one day if I really trusted the Skubinnas. One does not, if one's conscience is clear. My colleagues often pulled my leg for my alleged liberalism in dealing with the Germans, particularly for making friends with whole families: the Goersdorfs, the Skubinnas, the Borks, the Hilfreichs. Alas, many of them have since been arrested by Serov's men and tortured to extract information about me—information which they could not give because I had never given them any. For their sake I should have been more circumspect in my dealings with them, but at the time I did not see it. It is difficult to realise that one has to behave as a 'civilised savage' towards decent human beings in order that they should not suffer from worse savages. And how is one to fight Serovism-Stalinism if one does not, at the same time, behave kindly and humanly to one's fellow-men? Is the example of decent conduct to die out from the world altogether—in order to save it?

The Commission had so far failed. To some extent I was

responsible, but only indirectly: the real fault lay with Serov who, despite my constant reminders, persisted in behaving in a way which, whatever I did, was bound, in the end, to frighten off the Germans. Had he kept to his own function as administrative head of the Commission, leaving me to deal with the German scientists, I might well have been successful. I do not say that a conflict with him would not later have arisen over the application of the new rocket science, but that is another matter. As it was I continued to do my best to win the co-operation of Germans honourably, but Serov was gradually forcing me, as a revolutionary democrat, to fight Stalinism not only in the Soviet Union, but also abroad—or rather, on the international plane. My next major conflict with him came over the plans to kidnap the German rocket expert, Professor Wagner.

It began with a visit which I paid together with Vassily Stalin to Dr. Hilgers's Experimental Designing Office. Hilgers informed us that Wagner, earlier taken by the Americans, had now returned to Germany from the U.S.A. and was in the British zone near Göttingen. Vassily's eyes gleamed with boyish delight. We simply had to 'organise' Wagner! As quickly as I could I got him away from Hilgers's office, obviously not the place to say such things. Outside, I told him that there was not going to be any 'organising' of Wagner.

I might as well have spoken to the wind. Serov took an engineer named Oksen as his agent, and proceeded with his plans. It was the first and only time that I sat in on the organising of a kidnapping: false documents, money of the right kind, assistant agents to look after Wagner, or, if anything went wrong, to 'liquidate' him, special arrangements with our own frontier guards, and so forth. The instructions were to offer nothing, promise nothing, but get Wagner to the appointed place in order to *ensure* that he volunteered to come and work for us—at least to ensure that he never returned to the U.S.A. and worked for them.

Serov's thoroughness was remarkable, but I also acted with speed, and, so it turned out, with some success. I informed a certain foreign *scientist* of the danger threatening Wagner, and, to make doubly sure, I contrived to send a German girl to Western Germany to tell the story to a certain leading German social-democrat. Which of the two was successful, I still do not know. I only know that Oksen returned without Wagner and without information. Vassily Stalin was broken-hearted, and Serov so mad that Oksen was very nearly shot out of hand.

In the war I had done many things besides research and teach-

ing. But that was war. If anyone had told me that when peace returned I should be playing hide-and-seek with a super-terrorist I am sure I would never have believed him. Indeed how many readers will be able to believe that being Stalin's chosen representative on rocket propulsion meant this sort of thing?

But now the whole matter was brought to another climax. Serov told me he had sent 'more reliable' men to the West, to 'settle Wagner's hash', and I formed the inescapable conclusion that Serov meant to have him killed. From behind a corner a bullet would strike him down. I could no longer rest. I could not any longer be a member of a Commission whose head resorted to such acts. I therefore wrote a concise declaration to Malenkov, requesting to be relieved of my post under Serov. Immediately after this there was, as I learned, a long discussion between the Kremlin and Serov. What was said I do not know, but after it Serov sought a 'heart to heart' talk with me. It was a very strained talk. I outlined my case—who had appointed me, for what purpose. I indicated how inadmissible it was in my view to treat German scientists roughly; how useless such methods were either for obtaining knowledge, or for winning the German nation to our side. I then discussed the Party aspect. I said that I was a Party member, and had no right to act against the high ideals of socialism or the interests of the workers. He as candidate of the Central Committee should himself know that we were required to do nothing calculated to harm good relations with Germany. And since Serov insisted on trying to dragoon me into adopting his methods, I had had no other course but to appeal, as I had done, to the Central Committee.

To my surprise, Serov took this very calmly; indeed, he was much calmer than I was. Why he put up with so much I cannot understand, unless it was the fact that I had not been appointed by him but directly by Stalin. Several times I half expected him to draw his pistol and shoot me down. Such an 'accident' would have been easy to hush up in our circumstances.

New discussions followed about what we were to do; I reviewed the qualities of various German experts, in particular those of Professor Ludwig Prandtl. Vassily Stalin's ill-balanced mind was at once aflame. Now that, damn it, was the man for us! We simply must have his name on the pages of the Soviet press, his presence would give Soviet aviation science a real boost! I pointed out that Prandtl was an ageing and ailing man, and of such renown that if we did resort to shady means to obtain his services, it would do us more harm than good. But the two terrorists thought differently: the sheep was worth the kill, if only for its fleece.

However, I had a few days in which to act. First I took advantage of an unforeseen stroke of luck—a telephone talk with a man who was at the centre of things in Moscow. I asked him to bring the shabby plans of the terrorists to the knowledge of Stalin, or at least of Beria or Mikoyan, and he promised his assistance. At the same time I sent a letter to a certain Allied diplomat, hinting, as cautiously as I could, that better watch should be kept over Prandtl.

Here, since our subject concerns the ethics of the relations between man and man, man and the State, and one nation with another nation, I must relate the sorry sequel to my action. It is not only the men of the Soviet secret service who are devoid of moral standards, not only the U.S.S.R. which is in danger of founding the protection of the State on sand. While I was away from Berlin on business, I received a letter from the diplomat to whom I had written. It was couched in terms which, to put it mildly, were brusque and unceremonious. I put this down, at the time, to his poor command of the language in which he wrote. This Allied representative wanted me to meet a certain person who would speak to me 'in his name'. Disturbed though I was by the fact that the diplomat now knew my whereabouts, I decided to meet his representative. As it turned out, the meeting was an elaborate prelude to the insult he offered me. Speaking in the most condescending way—not that I stand on ceremony, but still I was not quite a nobody, and certainly not used to being addressed in such a manner—this person had the actual impudence to suggest that I should make him a secret report on the extent of Soviet knowledge of German aeronautics, and ended up by offering me 10,000 roubles for the service!

I have never in my life been more astonished. My hand for a moment rested on the butt of my automatic, but I controlled myself; even with a worm like this, I could not sink to Serov's level. 'A wonderful proposal,' I said, striving to measure my words. 'Mr. So-and-so is asked by me to take steps to look after Prandtl, and the answer I get is the proposal of a dirty little spy. In Russian, we have an expression for all such scallywags which you may care to take back to your master'—and I pointed. The agent actually tried to argue back, and compelled me to draw my pistol to get rid of him. I do not suppose it had ever occurred to him or his master that the Soviet world, like the Western, is composed of individuals, and that a Soviet man may have more honour than many a lackey of the Western régime.

But this is not all. I had to unburden myself to somebody. One feels when such a thing happens as if the insult had left its trace, like the passage of a snail. I told the whole story to my

personal driver, called Boldakov, an unpretentious, decent Soviet man. He had a similar story to tell me. An agent had offered him 500 marks—if he would get me to the Western Zone unprotected, to be kidnapped! I could have wept with mortification. I did not want to go to the West, but somehow I had considered that world to be above such things, and the thought had been a kind of encouragement. Now I had the sense of being set about by amorality on all sides. It was a blow to be made to realise that the same disease existed everywhere. It was also depressing to discover again how the two worlds intermingled. For just as the dirty fabrications about Serov's wife circulated on both sides of the so-called Iron Curtain, so did the knowledge of the efforts to buy Boldakov and Tokaev. We neither of us breathed a word to anyone else. Yet later we learned that the MGB already knew that Boldakov and Tokaev had both been offered foreign money. Nor was this a shot in the dark on somebody's part: the precise sums were known, 500 German marks, and 10,000 Soviet roubles!

Nor, when at last I was driven out of self-preservation to cross the frontier, did the official insults cease. I was approached by a man who, I think, represented a certain military intelligence service and offered a trifling sum of money and free passage and entry to a certain Western country—in return for information on the set-up and activities of certain opposition groupings in the U.S.S.R. This man clearly knew that I myself was an active oppositionist.

Many people would like to imagine that coming from the Eastern to the Western world was like coming out of darkness into full sunlight. Alas, for me it was no such thing. I did escape from certain forces of darkness. But I cannot say that I have found the Western world completely untainted.

I have not space for all the details of the search for Sängers, Tank and others. Serov was finally recalled—I believe he was even reprimanded!—and with him, Keldych and Kishkin. I was eventually placed at the head of the Commission, with Air Force Major-General G. A. Alexandrov as my second-in-command, and Engineers Lieutenant-Colonel Korobkov and Major Pronin as our assistants. In the interim period before I was fully in charge I managed to avert some trouble for other German scientists.

My appointment as chairman of the Commission made it incumbent on me to obtain results. My underground comrades demanded just that: at all costs I was to obtain the maximum confidence of the Kremlin. We needed to penetrate to the highest levels of the hierarchy and prepare our own strongpoints. The Kremlin too ruthlessly pressed for more rapid results in rocket aircraft. When

in the course of my work, I came across other useful inventions—an efficient system of prefabricating houses, an excellent machine for street cleaning—and forwarded such information, I got such replies as the following from Major-General Barinov: 'We got along in the past without such devices, and so we shall in the future, but we cannot manage without rockets.' I thought of our millions of homeless and of the women street-cleaners in our cities; but what mattered was war preparations!

Lange and his working-party now presented me with a fantastic proposal to design an aircraft, rocket-propelled, with a speed of up to 5,000 miles per hour, a range of flight of up to 7,000 miles, and an unbelievably high ceiling. In my opinion it was quite unreal. How tempting it was to make Potemkin village designs and gain immediate *kudos*! But I could not, and I reported against it. Alas, now Alexandrov showed his hand. I had suspected him of being Serov's man. He reported separately to Moscow, and, to my dismay, back came an answer from the Kremlin that we were to start work on the project at once: unlimited funds were guaranteed. I sent in yet another detailed statement, and set about trying to convince Alexandrov. His reply was to report to the Central Committee that my attitude towards the RS prototype, as it was called, was sabotage.

I was obliged to telephone to Vershinin, who encouraged me to stick to my guns and rely on his support. I was also most valiantly supported by Pronin. Now Klovov flew out from Moscow, called a conference, dismissed Alexandrov and made me head of the Air Force Department of SVAG. I tried to avoid the appointment, pleading that I was overburdened with work as it was, but Klovov insisted.

The conflict in Berlin had in fact been reflected larger in Moscow. There had been a conference there at which the Air Force Command had decided to face up to the constant MVD-MGB meddling in its affairs; the power of the Serovs and Alexandrovs was at last to be challenged. This was certainly a welcome development. But for me it meant an almost intolerable burden of work. When I add that I was still lecturing on the theory and practice of rockets and jet aircraft and by night putting the finishing touches to my own doctorate thesis, it can be imagined how busy I was. I have since often wondered where I found the energy. One explanation is that this was merely a continuation of that nervous supercharging which the war effort had given us, but I was of course also highly stimulated by the goal, which I thought I saw ahead, of breaking the power of the secret police.

The grand climax of it all was inexorably approaching. I was both flattered and alarmed to learn that whereas Malenkov and Vosnesensky had by now lost patience with me for still not having started work on mammoth rockets, Stalin, of all men, had said that the 'single-mindedness and caution of Tokaev are evidence of his maturity', and 'Tokaev is not to be hampered in his work; if he makes no promises, that means he will give the country a great deal'; (these are his words as reliably reported to me). There was thus now no going back. I was caught in the main current of the Kremlin maelstrom. One of the most obvious ways in which I could justify my position was to win Kurt Tank to our aid. Could I do this?

Now, during that summer (1947) I had once been rung up by a woman I did not seem to know, who wanted to see me. I knew the call was being tapped by the MGB, and I refused. She rang up again, on a line which was unlikely to be tapped; I agreed to meet her, yet thought better of it and did not go. Soon after this I was in the Berlin University Library, when a German girl spoke to me. She was charming and well dressed; she would have me believe that we had met in 1945. I had picked her up on the autostrada near Dresden in an exhausted condition and taken her to her mother. Now, I did recall some such incident, but I could not recognise her. Yet she knew my address and she mentioned a number of details which seemed to confirm what she said, so I believed her. This of course was the girl who had telephoned to me. She begged me to drive her out by the Avus autostrada towards Potsdam, and finally I agreed. It was pouring with rain. We halted by the roadside. Margaritte—she said this was her name—opened her bag and took out a photograph; did I recognise it? I did; it was Kurt Tank. I asked her the meaning of this and what she wanted of me. She said she knew I was looking for Tank. 'I am in a position to help you and I want to do so, to thank you for what you did for me.'

I turned the car round and requested her to leave me. I drove straight to Karlshorst, informed an officer of the MGB, and insisted that my telephone number and car should be changed at once. But I noticed that SMERSH¹ was not very eager to take the matter up. It was only later that I learned why. Margaritte was a Soviet agent, working for SMERSH. Now, the MGB was trying to stage-manage me by other methods.

A few weeks later I was summoned to the SMERSH Headquarters

¹ *Smersh: Smert shpionam*—'Death to Spies!'—a special department of the MGB, or Ministry of State Security.—*Translator*.

in the Weissensee suburb of Berlin and told that Tank was living in the British Zone, not far from Hanover. Would I care to invite him to visit me?

I insisted on handling the matter myself, and sent Tank a letter through the official courier between SVAG and the British Section of the Control Commission. But the letter merely found its way to SMERSH.

Then I was told that a man called Schlange had come from Western Germany and wished to get in touch with 'Kutsevalov or Tokaev' on behalf of Tank. But whenever I had dealings with Schlange I found that I was closely spied on both by the head of the MVD-MGB office for Brandenburg and by the civilian representative of SMERSH in Berlin. A new round of intrigue and counter-intrigue had begun.

At the same time, there was great official excitement in Moscow, and Stalin sent me a personal message to give up all other work and concentrate on getting hold of Tank. The man who brought me this message from Moscow was Serov! Orders were given to Kovalchuk, Head of MGB for Germany, and to other important officials to offer me every assistance in their power. 'But remember, Comrade Tokaev,' said Serov menacingly, 'Comrade Stalin is counting on you.'

Dratvin told me that Vassilevsky, Head of General Staff, had said that we must have Tank, or at least prevent him from working for the British.

'And what if I can't get him?'

'You must,' said Dratvin.

In his eyes I read the alternative: Serov would get me by the throat, Vassilevsky would have me court-martialled. It was the last stage.

THE BREAKING POINT

THERE IS an ironic wastefulness in the Kremlin's obsession with material power. Because of it Soviet aeronautic experts had for years been hampered—directed to unprofitable channels of research, arbitrarily imprisoned and incessantly harried. As a result we were immediately after the war driven to running after German scientists for the knowledge we should have long developed on our own. My contempt for this policy made me largely indifferent to whether I found Sängner or Tank. I continued the search because I had to: every eye was on me, I was surrounded by would-be helpers and protected by a network of 'bodyguards'. This I found particularly irksome. I was under orders not to go out in the evenings, never to move without an armed guard, not to carry any papers on me except my identity card, and never to halt in passing through Western Berlin. All this was because General Lukianchenko insisted that a foreign intelligence service was planning to have me kidnapped. I disbelieved him at first, but much later, in October, an attempt was in fact made. By that time I had also had warnings from Dr. Lange, who, I believe, was working for both sides, and from a prominent Western German Social Democrat.

But to come back to my dealings with Tank's go-between, Schlange. I did not like him personally. He claimed to be a Soviet sympathiser who believed in the peaceable intentions of the Soviet Union, but I did not altogether trust his motives. Nevertheless I believed that if we used him at all we must assume his good faith, and we must certainly assume the honesty of Professor Tank. The MGB suspected both of them of being British spies, and, when I insisted on Schlange's being allowed to return freely to Western Germany with an open invitation from me to Tank, they thought me mad. I stuck to my guns. My long experience of the underground struggle against secret police methods had convinced me that these methods defeated their own ends: for all its boasted concern for security, a secret police ultimately produces *insecurity* because it tends to base its actions on increasingly negative evaluations of character. So much is it on its toes to detect failings, weaknesses, inconsistencies, that it completely overlooks any positive qualities

which may in fact be the determining factors in a man's behaviour.

Schlange was allowed to go but he came back without Tank and without any satisfactory message from him. When this happened more than once, my position certainly grew difficult. It was already undermined by the fact that some members of the secret service not only falsely suspected me of being involved in treacherous work, but had also begun to guess at my underground anti-Stalinist activities. Klykov, one of Serov's assistants, one day questioned me bluntly about my relations with the *Tägliche Rundschau* and with Kurt Schumacher, whom I had indeed met several times. And now a far more severe blow was dealt to my prestige. Moscow knew, of course, that the Tank business looked like petering out as miserably as the Sängers business had done, and at last Stalin, who was staying in the Crimea for his health, expressed his displeasure. The moment this was known at SVAG, Pandora's box opened and I was wrapped in a cloud of noisome insinuations. Overnight my colleagues changed their attitude towards me. One, whom I had thought of as a close friend, went about saying that there was nobody as disgustingly unprincipled as your scientist. General G. A. Alexandrov now avoided meeting me and set the tone by spreading the story that 'Tokaeve has got himself into a mess with that spy Schlange'. One day I failed to get a notice of a meeting of the Party Bureau, though I could have been severely reprimanded for failing to attend it. Indeed there were only two men in SVAG who continued to behave towards me as before—General M. I. Dratvin and Major M. Pronin. They trusted me and I trusted them. All the same my life hung by a hair and I expected to be arrested at any moment.

At the eleventh hour, however, a man often finds new resources of energy. I mastered the lack of self-confidence which had been paralysing me and telephoned to Malenkov and to Vershinin, but neither was available. Finally, with great difficulty, I got through to a friend of mine inside the Kremlin, I—v. He said he had already talked about me with Poskriebyshchev (Stalin's personal Secretary), and Poskriebyshchev had spoken of me in the vilest terms.

A couple of days after this, Dratvin, looking extremely depressed, told me of a Moscow decision to relieve me of all my duties.

'But I take it I may return to Moscow?' I asked at once. That, in fact, was my strongest wish. I was sick and tired to death of being suspended in this unreal world. But there were no orders recalling me to Moscow, nor did Dratvin want me to go back. He wanted me in Berlin. He was used to me. I had been there

with him from the very start, when together we had worked out the scheme for the set-up of SVAG. He would talk to Vassilevsky, to Bulganin, Beria, Vosnesensky. 'I will not give in so easily.' Indeed, he immediately telephoned to Vosnesensky, who, I gathered, still supported me to some extent. If Tokaev was to go, he, Dratvin, would go too, Dratvin almost shouted.

The same evening I was ordered by General Melnikov to give Schlange the following message: 'Go at once to Wittenberg, and if Tank still interests us, I will come and see you both there.'

Schlange left, by train. From Melnikov I received instructions carelessly scribbled on a scrap of paper: 'As the Tank question is considered closed, you need have no further communication about it with Schlange or with anybody else; from now on you are relieved of this task.' The following day Lt.-General Lukianchenko summoned me and read me the following instructions as coming from Dratvin (clearly they had been prepared in advance): 'Further to the unsuccessful conclusion of the Tank affair, and also having regard to your being relieved of the posts you have occupied, I propose you should at once proceed to the SVAG Officers' Corps Rest House at Woltersdorf, and there await further instructions.'

It was very simple. Tank had suddenly ceased to be the object of our search: instead he had become the pretext for the case against Tokaev. Within twenty-four hours I was summoned by Colonel Klykov to his MGB office in the centre of Brandenburg. The office was also a fortress and a prison, and it was as a prison governor that Klykov greeted me.

'Aha! So now here you are, in the lock-up,' he said. 'How does that please you, Mr. Special-Emissary of Comrade Stalin?'

I sensed that the irony was not only at my own expense: here was one of the men who were assuming power now that the Georgian tyrant was ageing. I did not bother to reply.

'Do you know where *your* Mr. Schlange is?'

Silence.

'Do you realise why I sent for you here?'

Silence.

Klykov began a revealing soliloquy on the result of speechlessness under cross-examination. In the middle of it he rang a bell and a young Ukrainian came in and brought him a file. Klykov opened it and I saw the complete collection of the letters I had written to Tank. There were also photographs of Sanger and Tank, Schlange's pocket diary and a pile of other trifles. Did I admit the genuineness of these articles? Of course I did.

'And what have you to say about it all?'

'Only one thing: there is nothing more dangerous than to leave detective work to shallow minds.'

'What exactly does that mean, Comrade Tokaev?'

'That I did my best for my country, while other people spied on me.'

'Do you know where Schlange is?'

'I can guess. Once his pocket diary is in your file, he must be in your prison.'

'Quite right. He was arrested the very day you sent him to Wittenberg.'

'I sent him on General Melnikov's instructions.'

'We know that. And now this man cannot rest in his efforts to have a meeting with you. I wonder why?'

'I cannot say.'

'How can you prove you do not know?'

'How can you prove that I do?' It was a stupid rejoinder, but that is the only way one can talk to the Klykovs. I expressed my feelings more forcibly still by standing up and thumping his desk with my fist.

'Comrade Tokaev'—he at once shifted his ground—'what are your relations with the *Tägliche Rundschau*? And will you tell me which employees of Comrade Grotewohl's secretariat you are closely in touch with?'

I denied any contact with the newspaper and said I knew only two people in Grotewohl's offices. Who and what were they? I said I knew nothing about their past. 'And their present?' I asked him what exactly he wanted of me.

He began a long disquisition on Schlange's evidence. I learned much later that I had long been suspected of maintaining a shabby liaison with a girl in the Central secretariat of the German Socialist Unity Party in order to get secret documents both for our own underground movement and for Dr. Schumacher. Certainly I had had meetings with Schumacher, and Schlange's statements could be construed to refer to such links. It was from Schlange's statements too that Klykov suspected me of dealings with the newspaper. But by the time that Klykov's men had reached this point, I was out of their reach.

In fact my interrogation by Klykov suddenly came to nothing and my prestige soared upwards as dizzily as it had sunk only a few days before. A real message was received from Professor Kurt Tank; he wanted to have a meeting with me—specifically with me—and in the Soviet zone! Dratvin was delighted for my sake. As for Klykov, though he muttered darkly about 'reasons to suspect me', he could do nothing but let me go.

I met Tank on the border of the Zone, at Ebisfeld, West of Brandenburg. It was agreed that the MGB were to keep out of the way, but I found them before me at the meeting place, and was powerless to prevent the virtual arrest of Tank. Outwardly, however, in Soviet eyes, I had scored a huge success: my 'honest' methods really worked!

I had become a pariah, now I was again a hero. People who had shunned me now ran after me to offer their congratulations. Alexandrov actually hinted that I was recommended for the Hero of Socialist Labour Order, if not Hero of the Soviet Union. Dratvin indeed rather lost his head: *he* began to talk of the Order of Lenin. And indeed there were signs that there was something in it; in the meantime I was suddenly advanced to the rank of Colonel-Engineer. But my inner Kremlin friend, to whom I telephoned, put it differently: 'Congratulations,' he said, 'but I don't envy you.'

I was glad that Tank had come over. It did prove my thesis that decent methods got results. But I was outraged by his treatment. Soviet Intelligence treated him exactly as I was to be treated by the British Intelligence within a year; he found himself in a villa surrounded by armed sentries and with a pair of young intelligence officers constantly in the next room. He had come as my personal guest and I was dishonoured in his eyes and in my own, but no protests were of any use. Serov, Alexandrov, Barinov (Head of SVAG Military Administration) were imperialists as lacking in a sense of honour as are their kind anywhere. Between them and myself the gulf was very deep.

I did finally succeed in getting a hearing at last for my practical objections. It was obvious not only to Tank but to other Germans that he was a Soviet prisoner, and I could see the repercussions this was bound to have. A conference was held. I said that the non-Soviet world knew little of our ways and it was incumbent upon us to behave with care. It was likely that the rougher our methods the less we should obtain. But I was roughly attacked for what I said, and I have no doubt that my words hastened my end.

After the conference I rang up Gardinashvili and asked him to put me through to Beria. At first Beria was unwilling to say anything. For reasons unknown to me, but almost certainly based on his bad relations with Zhdanov, he was feeling his position to be insecure. However, Gardinashvili spoke to me again and told me to summon yet another conference, this time with Tank, in order to ask him what exactly his proposals were. So once again General Barinov, his Commissar assistant Colonel Belykh, General

Alexandrov, Tank, Naumann and I met, and now to our astonishment we learned from Tank that he was indeed prepared to work on a jet fighter for the U.S.S.R., provided that: first, all his present assistants were also given work; secondly, the material conditions were favourable, and thirdly, that before he finally decided he should be allowed to talk the matter over with Professor von Bock, who had been taken to the U.S.S.R. in 1945. His proposals were to work on an aircraft, the Ta-163, with speeds of up to 510 miles per hour, after which he would build Ta-185, with slight variations on Ta-183, and only after that his Ta-900, a bomber with speeds of up to 540 miles per hour. I reported back to the Ministry of Aviation Industry, and the following day Khrushchev telephoned to say they agreed, provided Tank would start with the bomber, which must have a range of 4,800 miles.

I told Khrushchev that I doubted if this was possible, chiefly because of the lack of the necessary power units. He telephoned a few days later to ask if Tank knew the British Rolls Royce Nene engine and could base the design of his aircraft on it.

Before I answered Khrushchev, I discussed the matter with a number of key men. We agreed that while it was wrong to assume that Soviet aircraft designers could not design a jet bomber, it was not in the interests of the country that they should. We had only just emerged from a destructive war and we had no business whatever to be planning another. The U.S.S.R. as we saw it was not really threatened by external enemies; therefore our own efforts must be directed towards *weakening*, not strengthening, the Soviet monopolistic imperialism in the hope of thus making a democratic revolution possible.

It was no theoretical problem we were arguing. What faced us was the wholesale squandering of industry on weapons of war, to the detriment of the long-suffering peoples of the U.S.S.R. For to concentrate on the immediate production of the newest jet aircraft did not mean merely setting certain factories to work on it; it meant dislocating and diverting the whole Soviet metallurgical industry. Priorities of research—not in aeronautics as such but simply in the constructional details of such advanced military aircraft—would absorb our highest skills and take them from the peaceful tasks we considered far more urgent.

We were forced, in fact, to a revolutionary decision, and it was in the light of this that we had to examine the problem of Tank. We approved of his being engaged for research but not of this feverish concentration on aggressive war weapons.

As a result, instead of discussing the Nene engine with Tank,

I merely told Khrunichev that the German had nothing to say either for or against it. I feel sure now that my attitude was interpreted as a wish to prevent the engagement of Tank. In fact, General Sokolov hinted to me that the difficulties in the way of getting Tank had perhaps come, not from the MGB as I had been claiming, but from 'a certain Soviet designer'—myself. Once again I had provided grounds for suspicion of sabotage, but here too the conclusion was drawn too late. Before the charges were ready for a new *Promparty* trial, the MVD had driven me into involuntary exile.

I have so far presented the Tank story in as simple an outline as possible. But of course in reality it was far less straightforward.

For instance, though the Kremlin wanted to set Tank to work, the Kremlin's MGB persisted in suspecting him of being a British agent. The Kremlin wanted all possible speed, but the Kremlin's bureaucracy, by sheer habit, considered it a point of honour to go slowly. The Ministry of Aviation Industry wanted to give Tank a research centre somewhere in Siberia, but certain scientists of this Ministry did not want the bomber at all. All these currents were intermingling, against a general background of mounting international tension. The Cominform was being set up. There was a constant barrage of cypher telegrams both ways. And all the time the MGB were busy ferreting out facts about Tank in Western Germany and Great Britain (where of course Tank had been on a visit).

All the chiefs, in Moscow and our 'little Moscow', were glued to their long-distance phones. It became impossible for anybody to take a decision. I made use of this time for lengthy and interesting discussions with Tank.

At last Vassilevsky lost patience and ordered the long-distance arguments to stop. Tank was to be detained pending a decision about his fate—for there were Soviet authorities who held that even if we did not engage him ourselves, he was never to be allowed to go back to the British. Tank himself at last began to get anxious and, as the autumn dragged on, said he would like to return for a time to West Germany. As ostensibly he was merely my guest, he had every right to do this. I rang up Vershinin and begged him to speak to Stalin—I had given Tank my word and Vershinin knew what that meant to me. He promised to help but told me that in the meanwhile, I must stop Tank from leaving. I tried to reach Stalin, Malenkov, Vosnesensky, Beria, Zhdanov, but without any result. I again spoke to Vershinin, but he merely ordered me curtly not to let Tank go. And then suddenly, orders came from Bulganin

to Dratvin: Tank was at once to be transferred to Moscow! The fat was indeed in the fire.

Dratvin, Barinov and I went to see Tank late that night. We told him he was being invited to Moscow. To my astonishment he accepted cheerfully, merely asking that Naumann should go with him. In that case, Dratvin said, he could fly tomorrow. But when we returned to Dratvin's office we found the heads of the MGB and MVD waiting for us. Each, separately, had received recent and urgent instructions to delay Tank's departure indefinitely! Dratvin pointed out that his own instructions were also fresh, and came from Bulganin, that is to say from the Government. But once more the police proved to be the real masters of the U.S.S.R. Vassilevsky, whom Dratvin rang up, said that he too had special orders directly from Beria: Tank was to be passed to the MGB-MVD *'and keep Tokaev out of it'*.

When, later, I paid a flying visit to Moscow, it was to have my suspicions fully confirmed. The country was now not merely terrorised by the political police working for Stalin, but power was passing altogether from Stalin to a still somewhat nebulous motley of adventurers, militarists and political police bosses and imperialists. They already were sufficiently strong to hold up a decision of the Government. This was the group by whom Beria was misled and persuaded into taking the extraordinary and latest step in the Tank affair.

It was difficult to know how to present this to Tank, but on Lukianchenko's suggestion we told him the following morning that his plane could not fly because of bad weather conditions farther on the route; a false meteorological report was even made out, to convince him.

When we had all returned to Karlshorst, I was visited in my office by a comrade standing very high indeed. For though powerless still to overthrow the régime, we revolutionary democrats were by this time strong enough to have our men in many key places. He put into my hand a little roll of micro-film negative. 'Be prepared for more trials, Comrade Tokaev,' he said quietly. 'Take a quick look through this, and then we'll discuss it.'

I scanned—nothing less than the latest additions to my personal dossier. My pulse quickened. Far too much was known. It was still some time before they would pounce—we knew the cat and mouse methods by which the secret police in a totalitarian society live—but the danger was great. Comrade R—— had done much to save many comrades from disaster, but of course, there was a limit to what he could contrive.

We discussed the position. Yes, it was clear, the *Tank Case* was fading out; or rather, it was turning into the *Tokaev Case*. I was particularly startled to see the last item which the bloodhounds had got on to. The hunt was uncomfortably close. And when the indictment was ready, there would figure in it deeds of as long ago as 1934—deeds from the time when Molotov was embracing Ribbentrop. They were gradually getting their evidence together.

‘But in my estimate, they will need another year to complete it,’ Comrade R—— assured me. ‘So the immediate task is to wind up this Tank business.’

To wind it up? Yes, *to free Tank*, to enable me to keep my word, that was Comrade R——’s meaning. And why, amid so much that was wrong, this insistence on punctiliousness towards one German? Because as revolutionary democrats, we were conscious of being Soviet men dealing with non-Soviet men. The day would come, we trusted, when it would be with us—not with the people who were then in the Kremlin—that the outer world would treat. Therefore, believing as we did that a man must always keep his word, we were also determined that this outer world should know of us as men of strict, untarnishable honour.

By that evening we had thought over and agreed on our plan. I cannot give details of the visit I paid late that night to a certain high-placed officer, let alone of the weapons I took with me. One of them was my automatic, loaded and the safety-catch back; another was my knowledge and the use I could make of it in our conversation. I put my case clearly. I expected a storm of anger; I had always known this man to insist on the most rigid discipline. But now he was quiet and yielding. For some time he paced up and down his room. I could see the outer signs of a convulsive inward struggle. At last, addressing me for the first time with the intimate *thou*, he asked me if I knew when Stalin was expected back from the Crimea, then he asked me to leave him to think things over. Two days later, Marshal Sokolovsky received orders from Moscow: let Tank go home, only request of him an undertaking to come back if Comrade Tokaev invites him.

On September 16th, Khrushchev rang me up to ask me to discuss a number of technical details with Tank, among them the question of the engines he proposed to use for his Ta-500. ‘Comrade Minister,’ I replied, ‘Tank has gone back home.’ Khrushchev was astonished. Half the Politbureau was in ignorance of the fact that instructions had been given that my word was to be honoured. To crown all, a day or two later a cypher telegram came from Vassilievsky: Tank was to be told that his proposals were unacceptable;

the communication was not to be made to him in writing, and he was not to be given back his documents and plans. Certainly the head no longer knew what the feet were doing.

And then, some ten days later, I received a personal letter from Tank stating that he was now ready to fly to Moscow, if my Government was still interested! Of course, the only conclusion that the Kremlin mind could draw from this was that Tank was definitely a British agent. It simply could not occur to men of their mentality that Tank could be a scientist accustomed to acting as an individual; that he had grown tired of waiting in Berlin and had wanted to visit his home on private business but that he was still prepared to take up a post in Moscow, if we wanted it. This was my view of it, but of course when Lukianchenko propounded the spy thesis, for tactical reasons, I readily agreed with him (this could in no way harm Tank). Then Vassilevsky rang up from Moscow again, and dictated the following message, to be sent to Tank *in my name*: 'If you desire to work in the U.S.S.R., you can come over to us on an open invitation, without any conditions attached.'

This was too much. I could not be sure that Tank would understand that a Moscow invitation 'without any strings attached' must be merely a trap, baited with my honour. The German messenger who had come from Tank was waiting in the guard-room. I went to him and told him as plainly as any man could that when he delivered the letter to Tank he should give him a personal message that this paper came from Vassilevsky and not from Tokaev.

It was not long before the same messenger was back again, with yet another letter from Tank. In it he told me he had been approached by a woman who claimed to be my representative and handed him a letter purporting to be from me. The MGB had not played this scurrilous card without result, for Tank in his letter unguardedly added that he hoped my family and I 'and everything else' were flourishing. What more proof was needed by the MGB than this 'everything else' to suggest my secret contact with my country's enemies? During the night of October 16th I was suddenly ordered by Major-General Sokolov, to go to General Melnikov, at the MGB Headquarters for Germany.

This, I thought, is the end. My wife, in tears, was convinced that she would never see me again. She roused our little daughter, to say good-bye to me. She herself enjoined me to be brave to the end. I had nothing on my conscience, and we were neither of us slaves by character, to take refuge in flight. 'I know,' she said, 'that they will tear you apart in their hatred of your loyalty to the

peoples of the U.S.S.R. and your faith in great and decent ideals.' I knew that I could count on her not to deny me.

But, fortunately, Comrade R—— was right; they were not yet ready; they needed a cast-iron case to destroy a man in as prominent a position as that into which they themselves had thrust me. All they wanted me for now, as Melnikov assured me, was to 'consult me on one or two matters', none of them concerned with Sängers or Tank. By daybreak I was home again.

I now received further warnings to beware of being kidnapped. I was hunted by émigré organisations dating from the revolution; they asked me to put them in touch with underground movements in the U.S.S.R.: they also tried to persuade me to desert to the West. I had met their kind when I first came to Germany, but now some of them were strongly backed by foreign money, and their arrogance had grown beyond belief. They showed me how closely I was shadowed from outside the Soviet zone as well as from inside it. One old émigré said: 'We know all about your talks with Kültz¹ and Dr. Schumacher. We know of your meetings with Franz Naumann . . . And how about the Menshevik Abramovich?' Were these feelers merely a trap set by MGB? Or were they an attempt at blackmail by a foreign power? 'If you don't join us, we could tell your secret police a thing or two about you'—that seemed to be the suggestion. Then came the attempt to kidnap me.

One day I was driving alone from Berlin to Schwerin when I noticed that a strange car was on my tail. I turned down a side road; the car followed. Suddenly it overtook me and cut in so sharply that, to avoid a crash, I was forced to skid into the shallow ditch beside the road. I jumped out, drawing my automatic, and fired a warning shot past the windscreen of the other car. Then, at pistol point, I forced the two men in it to get out and walk back down the road. But while I was getting my own car out of the ditch, they began to come back. Two more bullets at their feet stopped them. I holed the four tyres of their car to prevent them following me and drove fast to the nearest Soviet control point. In a short time both men were under arrest. One was an alleged Russian émigré, the other a German. Both were foreign agents.

Following all this, Comrade R—— sent for me to tell me that an unseen hand was certainly trying to make use of my conflict with Serov and his men; the object, he thought, was threefold: to cause trouble to our movement, to deprive the country of a rocket specialist and to get my services for someone else. It all pointed to an

¹ Leader of the German Liberal-Democrat Party.

Allied power. The old émigré was a genuine member of his émigré organisation, but was also working for a certain Allied country, which was making use of émigrés. And then, with an ironic smile Comrade R—— looked at me and said: 'You ask how I know? Because that old rascal is also working for the MGB. How very fortunate it was that you swore at him and turned him out.'

My situation was unbearable. I wanted to be a loyal son of my country and as such to play an honourable part in trying to influence its policy at home and abroad. The tyrants who ruled us forced me to do this by under-cover methods. And to my unutterable disgust, the war-time Ally who was loudest in denouncing the tyranny which I opposed, so far from giving our anti-Stalinist struggle its moral support, attempted to buy me, to kidnap me, spied on me mercilessly and used its knowledge to threaten to betray me to the MGB! There were moments when I was very near to shooting myself.

I applied to be sent back to Moscow. I pleaded for permission to return to my real work—research and lecturing on aerodynamics. But Dratvin still wanted me in Berlin; we were all harried by the MVD and MGB, he argued; and even Vershinin angrily rated me for what he called 'this scientific nonsense'. And when I went so far as to bring myself to ask Vassily Stalin to speak to his father on my behalf to allow me to return home, the only reply I got was that Stalin preferred to use me in Berlin. The most that I could get was a month's leave in Moscow.

I come now to the part of my story where, however interesting what I could tell might be, I cannot, for obvious reasons, give any but the vaguest indications. For at the end of 1947 the revolutionary democrats of the U.S.S.R. came to the conclusion that they must act: better to die honourably than to drag on as slaves of a régime paralysed by its own sickness. If any of us had ever imagined that some other country might assist us to freedom, I was able to disillusion them. It was time, we thought, to found in each of the republics of the U.S.S.R., a combative Revolutionary Democratic Party. We fondly believed that all decent citizens would welcome our initiative; and we liked to think that parties of a Liberal complexion and those belonging to the Second International abroad would try to help us. We knew that there were national communists not only in Yugoslavia, but also in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Baltic States, and we believed that they too would support us where they could *though we were not communists at all*.

The initiative was there, and the hope. But the MVD won in the race. We were too slow to mobilise. Once again we suffered

a catastrophe. When I went to Moscow on leave I found myself in the maelstrom of fateful events. Arrests had begun, and the charges ran all the way back to the assassination of Kirov in 1934 and the intended assassination of Ribbentrop and Molotov in 1939. Others were charged with Buonapartist conspiracies in 1937 and 1940, with bourgeois nationalism, with the proposed attempt to overthrow the régime in 1941. As the net closed in round us all, I was given the task, not an easy one in our conditions, of saving at least a part of our records. To preserve as much as possible from the imminent collapse was essential for the future. The struggle for freedom in a country in which tyranny is endemic is costly and long, paid for at great price by generation after generation. Each new upsurge of libertarian idealism is a step ahead, to be added to the tradition and serve as a stepping-stone for those who follow after.

I was returning to Berlin before the end of my leave, a proceeding quite out of order, but I still had passes which enabled me to travel not on a service warrant, but by an ordinary passenger aircraft. In Berlin, to my delight, I was met at the airport by Comrade R——, smart and untouchable in his MGB uniform.

And what now? R—— had instructions from our Moscow centre: if it seemed impossible to save me from arrest, every effort must be made to enable me to get in touch with Dr. Schumacher and Mr. Bevin, whom I should ask for sanctuary. He told me to be ready for this step, but I rejected it; the idea of going to the West was still unbearable to me. We all of us considered flight to the West a mistake, a betrayal of the Cause. It was not an effective foundation for our struggle against Stalinism. It meant that the movement lost a man in the U.S.S.R., and it meant that our enemy had an argument with which to blacken all of us.

In addition, let me be frank, I was appalled by the personal prospects which such flight was likely to open to me. What was I to do abroad? Feed information to foreign intelligence services? Live in some camp? I refused to be a displaced person. Besides, I did not see eye to eye with any émigré group. Flight abroad meant a life of isolation from my country, my comrades, my relatives, my people. The thought of the sudden descent from membership of the Scientific Council of so great a country to nothingness chilled my blood.

My decision was clear: if I was forced to it, I would go underground in the U.S.S.R., like many others. I would far rather be a partisan in the forests of Moscow province, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, or the Urals, than a refugee. I was haunted too by the thought of my old mother, who depended on me, of my sister,

innocent of any political action, of my sole surviving brother. And what would become of my wife and daughter?

Days and nights became an agony of tension. My army comrades in Berlin guessed what I was going through, and worked with desperation to save me—and others. And at last it seemed they had succeeded. Formal orders came to SVAG: I was to go to Moscow to take up another post. I began to prepare for my return. My heart was light, my breathing easy, for now I would either work or I would slip away into the life of the U.S.S.R.'s political underground. For a few hours I thought I had time before the final decision had to be taken. Then—fitters came from SVAG to my flat, and started to remove my telephone; I complained to Luki-anchenko; he said curtly: 'They must have their orders'; Dratvin and Borzov were 'too busy', could not see me. I was not allowed even to approach the long-distance telephones to Moscow.

After that storm warning, silence came again, and dragging days of strain. Then suddenly there was Klykov of the MVD-MGB, arrived from Brandenburg unannounced. 'So you're off back to Moscow, eh? By whose orders?' And when I replied that the orders had come from Moscow, he shrugged his shoulders and smirked sarcastically. With incomparable aplomb my wife insisted on Klykov's staying to lunch, and it was a very good lunch indeed. How glad he was to accept, greedily to eat good food and double portions, while he tried to catch overtones or undertones of our conversation and size up what we were really thinking. After lunch he lounged for what seemed an age in the massive German arm-chair in which were concealed those very papers he would have given anything to find.

I now knew, and Comrade R—— confirmed, that I should never be allowed to fly back to Moscow a free man. R—— insisted that I had no other course but to take refuge in the West, but still, for some days, I stuck to my plan for getting back into the U.S.S.R. to live an underground life; but one by one barriers which seemed insurmountable rose in my path, and the only clear road was that which stretched the other way. I approached German friends in both Eastern and Western Berlin, asking them if they would undertake to get my wife and daughter away, but each refused. I had many British, American and French acquaintances, but I hesitated to apply to them. My decision, a desperate one, was to approach the diplomatic representative of another country (not a member of the Control Commission). But while I was still only feeling my way I could understandably enough not give any information as to who or what I was, and the diplomat, being merely the official of a State,

would not discuss the matter with me without such knowledge.

At last I turned to the diplomatic representative of yet another free country. At first I am sure he suspected me of being a spy, but in the end he yielded to my pleas. I found myself obliged to name myself and give my rank. He asked his government and then extended me a helping hand.

I waited till the very last moment, before telling my wife that nothing was left to me but to escape West, that I had only forty minutes to spare. Her decision was immediate. I crossed the border, and a strange life of new tensions, new interests, new hopes but also new disillusionments began.

EPILOGUE

THE AUTHOR records with regret that some of those mentioned in this book, either by their real or their cover names, were shot in 1953-5 in connection with the Beria-Merkulov affair. Others were arrested and their fate is not yet known to us.

As for the notorious terrorist I. A. Serov, he after the Beria-Merkulov affair was appointed Chairman of the Committee of State Security attached to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., promoted to the rank of Army General (of the police), and decorated with the Order of Lenin; he lived in splendour, celebrating his achievements on the way to the present summit of his career. For this is the man who is today at the head of Soviet espionage throughout the world, a person concerning whom it would be well for free men everywhere to be better informed.

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